

Bible Class Primers.

EDITED BY
PRINCIPAL SALMOND, D.D., ABERDEEN.

OUR LORD'S ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE METAPHORS, EMBLEMS, INCIDENTS, AND ALLUSIONS
EMPLOYED BY OUR LORD TO ILLUSTRATE HIS
TEACHING, CLASSIFIED AND EXPLAINED.

BY

THE REV. ROBERT R. RESKER,

THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATE, KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON;
VICAR OF PURLEY, SURREY.

A COURSE OF LESSONS ON "THE GOSPEL OF ST MARK": "MEN OF THE BIBLE"
(OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT); "THE CREED,"
COMMANDMENTS, AND LORD'S PRAYER.

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CONTENTS.

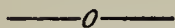
CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY	7
II. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DOMESTIC LIFE .	12
1. Houses—2. Furniture of the House—3. Food—4. Family Life—5. Household Service.	
III. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PASTORAL LIFE .	28
1. The Sheep-Fold—2. The Shepherd—3. Sheep.	
IV. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM AGRICULTURAL LIFE .	37
1. The Husbandman and the Labourers—2. The Soil and its Preparation—3. Sowing—4. Growth of the Seed—5. The Harvest and the Reapers—6. The Vineyard and the Vine.	
V. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM TRADE LIFE	50
1. The Fisherman—2. The Tailor—3. The Fuller—4. The Builder—5. The Pearl Merchant—6. Business Dealings in General.	
VI. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CIVIL AND NATIONAL LIFE	59
1. Administration of Justice—2. The Collection and Payment of Taxes.	
VII. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS	64
1. Marriage and Marriage Customs—2. Hospitality—3. Feasts—4. Salutations—5. Journeying.	
VIII. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM RELIGIOUS LIFE AND CEREMONIES	73
1. Prayer—2. Alms-Giving and Tithes—3. Fasting—4. Sabbath Observance—5. Hypocrisy—6. Religious Observances.	
IX. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE AND NATURAL PHENOMENA	82
1. The Seasons of the Year—2. The Heavenly Bodies—3. Phenomena of Nature.	
X. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY	90
XI. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURAL HISTORY .	92
1. The Animal World—2. The Vegetable World.	

	PAGE
XII. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE HUMAN BODY, AND ITS SENSATIONS, DISEASES, &c.	103
1. The Human Body—2. Bodily Sensations— 3. Bodily Sicknesses, &c.	
XIII. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PROVERBS AND PRO- VERBIAL EXPRESSIONS	110
XIV. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY	112
XV. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CONTEMPORARY HIS- TORY	120
1. The Investiture of Herod Archelaus—2. The Luxury of the Court of Herod Antipas—3. The War between Herod the Tetrarch and Aretas— 4. The Slaughter of the Galileans—5. The Fall of the Tower in Siloam—6. Robbers on the Road from Jerusalem to Jericho.	
XVI. MISCELLANEOUS ILLUSTRATIONS	124
1. Clothing—2. Divisions of Time—3. Measures and Money—4. Hidden Treasure.	

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OUR LORD'S ILLUSTRATIONS.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“THE common people heard Him gladly”; “Never man spake like this Man”; “All the people were very attentive to hear Him.” Such was the reception which our Lord’s teaching met with.

If we seek the causes of this popularity, we must assign the first place to the subject-matter of our Lord’s teaching. He came “preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God.” It was on subjects of vital moment that He spoke—of God, of salvation, of eternal life, of human conduct, of heaven. And on these subjects “He taught them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes” (St. Matt. vii. 29). “The teaching of their scribes was narrow, dogmatic, material; it was cold in manner, frivolous in matter, second-hand, and iterative in its very essence; with no freshness in it, no force, no fire . . . at once erudite and foolish, at once contemptuous and mean . . . and mostly occupied with things infinitely little. It was not, indeed, wholly devoid of moral significance, nor is it impossible to

find here and there, among the *débris* of it, a noble thought ; but it was occupied a thousand-fold with Levitical minutiae about mint and anise and cummin, and the length of fringes and the breadth of phylacteries, and the washing of cups and platters, and the particular quarter of a second when new moons and Sabbath days began."^a Our Lord's teaching was the very opposite of this : He spoke from the heart to the heart of "the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith" (St Matt. xxiii. 23), "and of the love of God" (St Luke xi. 42). The contrast was so great, it was no wonder that "they were astonished at His teaching."

But there was another reason which led the people to hang upon His lips and listen to His words. It was the manner of His teaching which, as Trench observes, "has given us the secret of all effectual teaching."^b "He gave no doctrine in an abstract form, no skeletons of truth, but all clothed, as it were, with flesh and blood." The Oriental mind is especially fond of allegory, metaphor, and parable. Hence so much of the Bible is in this form, which even to us Westerns adds so greatly to its charm and interest, regarding it merely as a literary production. The Old Testament prophets largely employed this figurative method of conveying their messages. But our Lord excelled them. "Without a parable spake He nothing unto them" (St Matt. xiii. 34, R.V.), and this was the case with His teaching generally, as well as with those special utterances to which we limit the term parable. In His

^a Farrar, "Life of Christ," vol. i., p. 266.

^b Trench, "Parables," p. 25.

ordinary teaching He drew illustrations from things around Him—from Nature, from facts and events known to His hearers, from familiar manners and customs, and the circumstances of daily life. These furnished Him with familiar object-lessons, by which He conveyed to the minds of His hearers some important truth or enforced some principle of moral conduct. “It was a popular intelligibility that was aimed at by Jesus. . . . He possessed a masterly skill of concise portrayal of the subject in hand, and of bringing it home to those of humble, uncultured intelligence.”^a

“Had our Lord spoken naked spiritual truth, how many of His words, partly from His hearers’ lack of interest, partly from their lack of insight, would have passed away from their hearts and memories and left no trace behind them? But being imparted to them in this form, under some lively image, in some short and perhaps paradoxical sentence, or in some brief but interesting narrative, they roused attention, excited inquiry, and even if the truth did not at the moment, by the help of the illustration used, find an entrance into the mind, yet the words must thus often have fixed themselves in their memories and remained by them.”^b

So largely did our Lord employ this illustrative method of teaching, that it would be almost possible to describe the political, civic, social, and religious life of the people from His allusions, clear or veiled, to the details of daily life. Familiar as we all are with many of these allusions, it is only when we

^a Wendt, “Teaching of Jesus,” vol. i., pp. 110, 111.

^b Trench, “Parables,” p. 26.

search the Gospels with the object of discovering them that we can fully realise how largely they were employed.

But one thing more is to be noticed in regard to this character of our Lord's teaching, which is best expressed in the following words : "What, however, is above all wonderful here is that the Man Who had such rich material of popular eloquence at command has used it ever in strict subservience to the purposes of the religious thoughts to whose announcement He devoted His life. Throughout His recorded discourses we never find that He has given free play to His fancy in order merely to please Himself and others, or for the sake of showy embellishment. . . . The artistic form of speech was never with Him an end in itself, so as to turn attention upon itself and away from the matter of discourse. The one aim of Jesus in regard to style and method was to make His meaning plain and show the importance of His ideas. . . . No facts of Nature or of human life appeared too small to be unable to aid Him in bringing His teaching of the kingdom of God home to the human understanding." ^a

The Bible-class and Sunday-school teacher can hardly have a more profitable subject of study than our Lord's method of teaching. Our Lord is the Model Teacher ; and from the way in which He conveyed His lessons to the simple minds of those who were "children in understanding" we may gain many hints how to deal with those who are children in age as well as mind. "The aim of the

^a Wendt, "Teaching of Jesus," vol. i., p. 15a.

teacher who would find his way to the hearts and understandings of his hearers will never be to keep down the parabolical element in his teaching, but rather to make as large use of it as he can."^a The investigation will, at the same time, throw a new light on many well known expressions, and will thereby enable the teacher to impart freshness and interest to his lessons.

But while the teacher in particular may find in this attempt to classify and explain our Lord's illustrations what may help him in his important work, the ordinary Bible student will also, it is hoped and believed, gain some fresh thoughts or find some new interest added to his reading of the Gospels, by a study of the chapters which follow.

Illustrations have been compared to the windows of a house. They let in the light. Judged by this definition, we shall see how wonderfully luminous our Lord's teaching was. And as we arrange and catalogue the illustrations which He employed, we shall hardly fail to be surprised at their number and variety. The study will also bring into relief the large field from which our Lord drew His illustrations, and at the same time show how small and apparently commonplace details did not escape His observation, and were invested by Him with dignity. It will be found that the Gospel of St Matthew abounds in this form of teaching, perhaps because it was more especially intended for the Jewish people. Where the same allusions occur in corresponding passages in the other Gospels, it will be sufficient to refer only to St Matthew, unless, as is sometimes

^a Trench, "Parables," p. 25.

the case, any additional figure or statement is added.

It should be mentioned that the passages are quoted from the Revised Version, which often throws considerable light on the point of the illustration.

CHAPTER II.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DOMESTIC LIFE.

VERY numerous are our Lord's allusions to the home life of the people ; and we can well understand how the lessons which He drew from such familiar subjects would appeal to His hearers. So varied are these references that it will be well to sub-divide them, classing together those which refer to houses, furniture, food and its preparation and consumption, and the family life.

I. **HOUSES.** For the most part our Lord appears to have in view the houses of the poor, rather than the dwellings of the rich. Doubtless the "cottage home" of Nazareth was often in His mind on these occasions. Built generally of clay or sun-dried mud bricks, these houses offered little protection against burglars, who were accustomed to enter them by making a breach in their frail and yielding walls. The insecurity of earthly riches is illustrated by—

"Where thieves do not break through ('dig through,' *marg.*) and steal" (St Matt. vi. 20);

and the need of watchfulness for the Lord's return by the householder expecting a thief—

“He would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken (‘digged,’ *marg.*) through” (St Matt. xxiv. 43).

With but few windows, and these very small, and with an earthen floor easily worn into dust by the



Peasant House in Palestine, with steps leading to the top
on the outside

feet, the lighting of a lamp and the sweeping the room to find a missing coin indicated the means employed to seek after the lost—

“What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?” (St Luke xv. 8.)

Either the secrecy of the store-cupboard, or of an "inner chamber" leading out of another room, from which alone access could be gained to it, suggested the charge—

"When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber" (St Matt. vi. 6).

The flat housetop, sometimes reached by an outer staircase, was a favourite place of resort, especially in the evening, either for sleep or for talk with neighbours. As news was publicly spread in this way, so our Lord's disciples were charged to make known their message in as public a way—

"What ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops" (St Matt. x. 27).

The houses in towns being contiguous, the roof of one touching another, "it was possible in time of danger to pass quickly from roof to roof without descending into the houses, till a point was reached from which a man might escape into the country."^a This illustrates the need of haste and disregard of worldly goods when destruction should threaten Jerusalem—

"Let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house" (St Matt. xxiv. 17).

The door of the house does not pass unnoticed. It was usually two-leaved, and in one of the two divisions hung "a small wicket-gate, giving admission to one person only at a time. This narrow entrance may possibly be the 'strait gate' of St Matt. vii. 13, as distinguished from the broad entrance—the 'wide gate'—afforded when both

^a Kitchin, "Models and Objects for Scripture Teaching," p. 16.

doors are thrown open." As a person has to stoop to enter by this small door, and only one could enter at a time, so to those who would find admission into His spiritual house the Saviour said—

"Enter ye in by the narrow gate ; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it" (St Matt. vii. 13, 14).

The knocker on the door finds notice—

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (St Matt. vii. 7).

The door, closed for the night, or after the guests have entered for a marriage feast, and the repeated and loud knockings to gain admission, illustrate the ineffectual efforts of a man to find salvation when it is too late—

"When once the Master of the house . . . hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us," &c. (St Luke xiii. 25).

"And the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us" (St Matt. xxv. 10, 11).

The key was carried by the stewards of great houses as a symbol of office. It was made of wood, with fixed pins corresponding with the holes in the lock into which loose pins dropped on the door being closed, and so fastened it. These pins, by pushing up those in the lock released it. When our Lord indicated to St Peter that he would be privileged to admit converts to the Christian Church, as at Pentecost, He said—

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (St Matt. xvi. 19).

The scribes, on admission to office, received as a symbol "the key of knowledge," as stewards of Divine wisdom. When our Lord condemned them for their imperfect and unsatisfying teaching, and for failing in their appointed duties, He said—

"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge" (St Luke xi. 52).

2. FURNITURE OF THE HOUSE. The simple furniture of a cottage home supplies our Lord with many illustrations. A bed, a lamp, and a measure were to be found in every poor man's house.

The bed was the raised couch round the room, covered with cushions, boarded down to the floor in front, on which they reclined at meals and reposed at night. As this couch was open at either end, in the daytime a lamp could easily be placed underneath out of the way, while at night it would be brought out, placed on its stand, and lighted.

The bushel was a Roman measure, holding about a peck, probably introduced into Palestine after its conquest by the Romans, and being more accurate than other Oriental measures, it came into general use. It may often have been turned upside down for use as a seat, and in the daytime a lamp could easily have been concealed under it. The folly of putting a lighted lamp under either bed or bushel was used by our Lord to indicate the responsibilities of His followers, to teach them that no one received the light of the Gospel merely for his own sake, but with a view to his influencing others, and communicating His gift to them—

"Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under *the*

bushel, but on *the* stand ; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men" (St Matt. v. 15, 16).

"Is *the* lamp brought to be put under *the* bushel, or under *the* bed, and not to be put on *the* stand?" (St Mark iv. 21).

(The definite article indicates not only the familiarity of the lamp, stand, bushel, and bed, but implies also that there was only one of each of these in the house.)

The figure of the lamp—a small earthen vessel, which was placed on a stand, two or three feet in height—was used by our Lord, as referred to above, to indicate the means whereby the lost were to be found, to illustrate the character and work of John the Baptist—

"He was the lamp that burneth and shineth" (St John v. 35)—

and to represent what Christians are meant to be. Those who also took oil in their vessels, whereby to replenish their tiny lamps, stood for Christians in deed and truth, with grace abiding in them—

"Ten virgins which took their lamps . . . five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them : but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (St Matt. xxv. 1-4).

With the houses of the wealthier classes in His mind, our Lord drew lessons from the seating of the guests at feasts. The tables were arranged to form three sides of a square, along which the guests reclined on couches, so that the head of one man was near the breast of the next. Thus St John is described as "leaning on Jesus' bosom" (St John

xiii. 23). The friendship and communion of heaven was illustrated by this posture—

“Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down (‘recline,’ *marg.*) with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (St Matt. viii. 11).

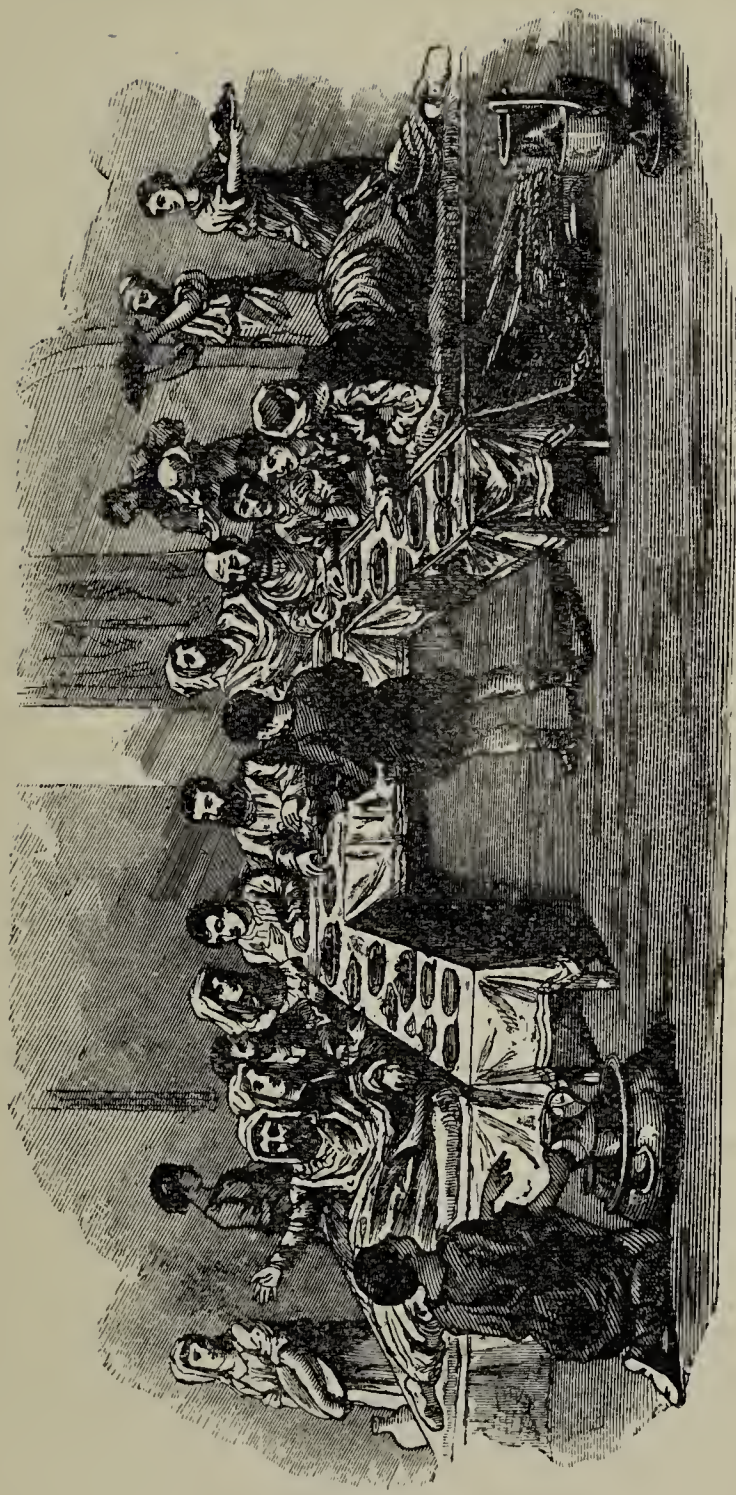
The guests reclined on the couches, resting their left elbows on a cushion, their feet being stretched out behind. This posture permitted the woman at the Pharisee’s feast and Mary at Bethany to anoint our Lord’s feet (St Luke vii. 37, 38 ; St John xii. 3). The places next the host on either hand were usually the most honourable, and were regarded as the “chief seats.” The pride and self-assertion of the Pharisees in choosing the best seats were depicted in the words—

They “love the chief place at feasts” (St Matt. xxiii. 6).

And our Lord taught His followers the lesson of humility when, referring to disputes which sometimes arose as to who should occupy these seats, when it became necessary to rearrange the guests, He said—

“Sit not down in the chief seat . . . but when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place” (St Luke xiv. 8, 10).

The late Dean Howson, in his charming book on “The Metaphors of St Paul,” refers to the necessity of reproducing and realising the “manners and customs and the outward expression of the old social life” as a condition of fully grasping the meaning of an ancient writer. “Even in order to understand the bare meaning of the words . . . much more, when we desire to appreciate the



A Supper Scene

nicer shades of meaning, and to enter into the full force of figurative language," is this an essential. This is certainly true also of our Lord's utterances, which, as we have seen, are so largely set forth in figurative words.

From the house and its furniture we pass to food, its preparation and consumption, as furnishing our Lord with many illustrations.

3. **FOOD.** Lemuel described the virtuous woman as one that "riseth while it is yet night, and giveth food to her household" (Prov. xxxi. 15). Our Lord, in setting forth the sad fact that those nearest each other in this life may be very different both in character and destiny, alludes to the work of women in grinding corn for household use—

"Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, one is left" (St Matt. xxiv. 41).

"Two women are sitting before the door of their house, upon a large piece of sackcloth, grinding on a hand-mill . . . facing each other; both have hold of the handle by which the 'upper' is turned round on the 'nether' mill-stone . . . both retain their hold, and pull to, or push from, as men do with the whip or cross-cut saw."^a The circular stones are about two feet in diameter, the upper having a hole in the centre, which receives the corn, and by moving the handle the two women keep it in constant motion. But while this was the usual method of grinding corn in cottage homes, there was a larger mill-stone in use which was turned by an ass, to which our Lord referred when speaking of the

^a Thomson "Land and the Book," pp. 526, 527.

punishment of those who were stumbling-blocks to others—

“Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea” (St Matt. xviii. 6).

The property of leaven, used in making bread, is referred to with a double meaning. Its power of turning flour into dough describes the inner working, the diffusive and assimilating power of the Gospel—

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened” (St Matt. xiii. 33);

while, as corrupt in itself, it becomes the symbol of false teaching and hypocrisy—

“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. . . . Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (St Matt. xvi. 6, 12).

“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (St Luke xii. 1).

The heating of the oven for the baking of the bread by burning dried grass finds mention in the Sermon on the Mount—

“But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (St Matt. vi. 30).

The bread thus made and baked, the staff of life and the staple food of the household, represents the general blessings which our Lord bestows—

“It is not meet to take the children's bread (‘loaf,’ *marg.*) and cast it to the dogs” (St Matt. xv. 26);

and for which he bids us pray—

“ Give us this day our daily bread ” (St Matt. vi. 11).

And in our Lord's solemn discourse after the feeding of the multitude, as well as at the Last Supper, it is elevated into a figure of the highest spiritual significance—a symbol of Himself as the Satisfier of those experiencing spiritual hunger, and of His body as given for the “ strengthening and refreshing of our souls ”—

“ I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger ” (St John vi. 35).

“ The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world ” (St John vi. 33).

“ I am the Living Bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea, and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world ” (St John vi. 51).

“ As they were eating, Jesus took bread (‘a loaf,’ *marg.*), and blessed, and brake it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body ” (St Matt. xxvi. 26).

The act of eating and drinking suggests the method by which the blessings of eternal and spiritual life are appropriated to the individual—

“ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ” (St John iv. 14).

“ If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink ” (St John vii. 37).

“ This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die ” (St John vi. 50).

“ Take, eat. . . . Drink ye all of it ” (St Matt. xxvi. 26, 27).

The anxious care and burdensome effort which characterise so many in regard to bodily needs, to the neglect of those of the soul, is rebuked—

“Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink” (St Matt. vi. 25).

“Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life” (St John vi. 27).

When our Lord would indicate the higher source of satisfaction which He experienced when souls were drawn to Him over that afforded by the relief of bodily hunger, He said—

“I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work” (St John iv. 32, 34).

4. **FAMILY LIFE.** The episodes and details of family life do not escape observation. The sorrow of the mother turned into joy at the birth of her child preshadowed what should be the experience of Christ's Apostles—

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice” (St John xvi. 21, 22).

Birth itself indicates the change which they must undergo who would enter into the kingdom of heaven—

“Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (St John iii. 3).

Human relationships are pictures of spiritual kinship—

“Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother” (St Matt. xii. 50).

The humility of mind and the receptivity of

children are pointed to as characteristics of Christ's followers—

“ Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ” (St Matt. xviii. 3, 4).

“ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes ” (St Luke x. 21).

The father in bed with his children, and the two men in one bed, throw light on the customs of the people, pictures drawn from “a poor man's house, children and parents sleeping in the same room, the younger children in the same bed . . . probably the divan or raised platform, which often filled nearly half a room in a Jewish or Eastern house ”— ^a

“ Trouble me not ; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ” (St Luke xi. 7).

“ In that night there shall be two men on one bed ; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left ” (St Luke xvii. 34).

Even the games of the children were not beneath His notice. He had observed them, and had noticed how their attempts to please their fellows had sometimes failed ; and He points out that their conduct was analogous to that of the Jews in regard to their treatment of John the Baptist and Himself. They were “like children in the empty market-places, playing at marriages and mournings ; some making music on the flute for the one ; some acting like mourners for the other ; but neither the cheer-

^a Plumptre, “Ellicott's New Testament Commentary,” vol. i. p. 296.

ful piping nor the sad beating on the breast pleasing the companion audience"—^a

"Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market-places, which call unto their fellows and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn" (St Matt. xi. 16, 17).

The son leaving the restraints of home for a far country is a touching parable of the wanderer from God; while the remembrance of the father's love and the abundance of the home he had left, which leads to his return, find their counterpart also in the sinner's home-coming to God—

"The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (St Luke xv. 13).

"When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger? I will arise and go to my father" (St Luke xv. 17, 18).

Family discords and separations find their parallel in the divisions which Christianity would create in families where some members only were influenced by it—

"I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (St Matt. x. 35, 36).

5. HOUSEHOLD SERVICE. The householder bringing out of his store-cupboard the produce of the present and of former years, and the steward supplying the daily needs of the household, are pictures of the faithful teacher who supplies out of the storehouse of truth and from the depth of his

^a Geikie, "Life of Christ," vol. ii., p. 118.

own experience the old verities with an ever-fresh setting—

“Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (St Matt. xiii. 52).

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant (‘steward,’ St Luke xii. 42) whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season?” (St Matt. xxiv. 45).

The servants, or slaves, in not knowing the mind of their masters, furnish an illustration of the difference between such and those who serve Christ—

“No longer do I call you servants (‘bond-servants,’ *marg.*); for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you” (St John xv. 15).

They also—especially in regard to their duties of waiting at table and washing the feet of the guests—illustrate our Lord’s service for men, and also teach the lesson of humility to His followers—

“For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as He that serveth” (St Luke xxii. 27).

“If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you” (St John xii. 14, 15).

The Jewish custom of taking a bath before meals, and washing the feet on arrival at the house, in order to remove the dust contracted on the way, symbolises the one great spiritual washing away of sin, as well as the need of the daily cleansing away of daily sins—

“He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit” (St John xiii. 10).

The ceremonial washing of the hands before meat, and of the outside of pots and cups (St Mark vii. 3, 4), is referred to in order to show the folly of mere external cleansing when the heart remains impure—



Washing of Hands

“To eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man” (St Matt. xv. 20).

“Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee,

cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also" (St Matt. xxiii. 25, 26).

The earnest entreaty of the man at whose house a friend arrives unexpectedly at midnight to a neighbour to lend him some loaves, and the granting of the request simply because of his urgent demand, illustrate the value of importunate prayer—

"Because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you" (St Luke xi. 8, 9).

CHAPTER III.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PASTORAL LIFE.

AS we pass from the home and the family to the out-of-door life of the people we find that our Lord was as observant here as in the former sphere. Indeed, as will be seen, He drew even more largely upon Nature than upon any other department of human life or knowledge. The phenomena and processes of Nature, the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, as well as the details of pastoral and agricultural life, were equally at His command. And this is in complete accord both with His own relation to Nature as the Son of God and with the habits of His life as the Son of Man. For was not the world *His* world—His own creation? "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made" (St John i. 3). And did He

not for the most part live an out-door life? Certainly a large portion of His recorded teachings was given in the open air, under the blue roof of the temple of Nature. It was therefore in accordance with the fitness of things that He should give point to His teaching by allusions to what His eyes and the eyes of His hearers rested upon day by day, or even while He was speaking.

We proceed to classify our Lord's illustrations drawn from pastoral life, and next from agricultural life, and later on those which refer to natural phenomena and natural history.

Palestine was above all things a pastoral and agricultural land. Isolated from other countries on the west, east, and south, it had to depend upon its own productions for the support of its population, its pastures, corn-fields, vine-yards, and olive-yards. On the slopes and table-land of the central mountain range, which runs from north to south, and especially in the wilderness of Judæa, which stretches forty miles south to the desert, and dips down on the east to the Dead Sea, were extensive pasture lands. The Patriarchs were sheep farmers, and Abraham had his flocks and herds at Bethel, Lot in the plain of Jordan, Jacob at Shechem and Dothan; and, later in history, David shepherded his sheep at Bethlehem, Amos in the wilderness of Tekoah, and the shepherds at our Lord's birth, "watched over their flocks by night" near David's birthplace. In our Lord's day, whatever other changes had passed over Palestine, it had not lost its pastoral characteristics. Certainly the sheep-fold, the shepherd, and the sheep must have been familiar to the people of

His time, or He would hardly have referred to them so pointedly as He did. For the sacrifices of the Temple, as well as for the food and clothing of the people, large numbers of sheep and oxen must have been produced in the country. Dr Porter, speaking of modern times, says, "Large-tailed sheep abound, and form the principal article of animal food."^a

I. THE SHEEP-FOLD. The sheep-fold is open to the sky, "defended by a wide stone wall, crowned all round with sharp thorns, which the prowling wolf will rarely attempt to scale,"^b in which the sheep find shelter for the night, when they are committed "to the care of an under-shepherd, who guards the door. In the morning the shepherds knock, and the porter opens the door . . . and each shepherd calls his own sheep, who know his voice and follow him to the pasturage."^c

The door, through which access was gained to the fold, was a symbol of our Lord, the only "Way" to eternal life and the heavenly home—

"I am the door of the sheep . . . I am the door: by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (St John x. 7, 9).

All who put themselves in the place of Christ, the "one Mediator," were like thieves and robbers who, climbing over the wall, sought to steal the flock—

"He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. . . . All that came before Me are thieves and robbers. . . . The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy" (St John x. 1, 8, 10).

^a Art.: "Palestine," Kitto's "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature."

^b Thomson, "Land and the Book," p. 201.

^c Ellicott, "New Testament Commentary," vol. i., p. 467.

While the sheep-fold itself represents God's kingdom on earth—the visible Church, Jewish and Christian, in which there may be many "*folds*" under earthly shepherds—hereafter all will become "one *flock* under one shepherd"—

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice ; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd " (St John x. 16).

2. THE SHEPHERD. Our Lord's comparison of Himself to the door of the sheep-fold "makes no account of the devoted care with which Jesus ministers salvation to His people ; therefore this additional idea is brought out by a second parable (ver. 10-15). As the good shepherd, in contrast to the robber who will only injure the flock, and in contrast to the careless hireling who leaves it in the lurch in time of danger, devotes his life for the welfare of the sheep, so Jesus exhibits Himself as the true Saviour in lovingly devoting His life for them."^a

In order to realise the force of the comparison of Himself to the shepherd it is necessary to bear in mind the difference between Eastern and Western ideas of a shepherd. "Beneath the burning skies and the clear starry nights of Palestine there grows up between the shepherd and his flock a union of attachment and tenderness. It is the country where at any moment sheep are liable to be swept away by some mountain torrent, or carried off by hill-robbers, or torn by wolves. At any moment their protector may have to save them by personal hazard. The shepherd king tells us how, in defence of his

^a Wendt, "Teaching of Jesus," vol. i., p. 128.

father's flock, he slew a lion and a bear ; and Jacob reminds Laban how, when he watched Laban's sheep in the day, the drought consumed. Every hour of the shepherd's life is risk. Sometimes for the sake of an armful of grass in the parched summer days he must climb precipices almost perpendicular, and stand on a narrow ledge of rock where the wild goat will scarcely venture. Pitiless showers, driving snows, long hours of thirst—all this he must endure if the flock is to be kept at all. And thus there grows up between the man and the dumb creatures he protects a kind of friendship. . . . You love those for whom you risk, and they love you ; therefore it is that, not as here where the flock is driven, the shepherd goes before, and the sheep follow him. They follow in perfect trust, even though he should be leading them away from a green pasture, by a rocky road, to another pasture which they cannot yet see. He knows them all—their separate histories—their ailments—their characters.”^a Such was the “good,” the noble, the true shepherd, who was a type of the Divine Shepherd—

“ I am the good Shepherd : the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep ” (St John x. 11).

“ The Eastern Shepherd never *drives*, but always leads his sheep, and that without the aid of a dog.”^b The sheep “are so tame that they *follow* their keeper with the utmost docility. . . . It is necessary that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn

^a Robertson, “Sermons,” vol. ii., No. 20.

^b Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p. 140.

which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on ; but if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. This is not the fanciful costume of a parable ; it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly. . . . Some sheep always keep near the shepherd, and are his special favourites. Each of them has a name to which it joyfully answers."^a

The shepherd's leading the sheep, and his personal knowledge of each, illustrate our Lord's relation to His people—

"The sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. . . . He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers" (St John x. 3-5).

"I am the good Shepherd ; and I know Mine own, and Mine own know me" (St John x. 14).

The false shepherds of the spiritual flock are like the hireling under-shepherds, who leave the sheep when the wolf approaches (unlike David, 1 Sam. xvii. 34-36)—

"The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep" (St John x. 13).

But the good shepherd is not content with caring for the sheep in the fold ; he seeks for those which

^a Thomson, "Land and the Book," p. 203.

have strayed, and rejoices when he finds them. This finds its parallel also in the Divine Shepherd—

“If any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (St Matt. xviii. 12-14; comp. St Luke xv. 4-7).

The shepherd being attacked, and the sheep, left without a leader, becoming scattered, represents what would happen to His Apostles when He should be taken prisoner—

“All ye shall be offended in Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (St Matt. xxvi. 31).

Flocks of sheep and goats are frequently pastured by the same shepherd, and at night are folded together within the same enclosure. An English writer mentions how a shepherd at Nazareth told his informant that the sheep and goats are separated “in the morning when they go out to pasture. The goats can be driven more quickly than sheep. Moreover, goats can find pasture where sheep could not possibly feed.”^a This division finds its parallel in the final separation between the righteous and the wicked, which will take place on the morning of the Great Day—

“He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (St Matt. xxv. 32, 33).

^a Bardsley, “Illustrative Texts,” p 140.

It is to the shepherd our Lord compared His ministers when He said to St Peter—

“Feed My lambs. . . . Tend My Sheep. . . . Feed My sheep” (St John xxi. 15-17).

3. **SHEEP.** The portion of the Holy Land once held by Israel is not rich in pasture suited for cattle, so that it could never have supported great herds. But its dry, chalky soil, growing sparse aromatic plants, salt-containing herbs, its stunted brush, and stretches of light hill-grasses, offered abundant food for sheep and goats. The extent to which these characteristics of their country were utilised by the Hebrews, and the importance of the part which sheep and goats fill in their history, may be judged from the fact that they are mentioned in the Bible more than 500 times.”^a

The sheep wandering from the fold is a picture of man straying from God. “To go astray in the open plain brings danger, for a lost sheep is a ready prey to some chance wild beast from the mountains. But if it be lost in the desolate hills, its destruction is almost certain if it be not found again, for there wolves and jackals abound, while leopards still prowl in the hills of Gilead, in those round the Dead Sea, and about Carmel and the hills of Galilee.”^b In addition to the Parable of the Lost Sheep (St Luke xv. 4-7), we have the following allusions :—

“The lost sheep of the house of Israel” (St Matt. x. 6, xv. 24).

“The multitudes . . . were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd” (St Matt. ix. 36).

^a Geikie, “Holy Land and the Bible,” vol. i., p. 230.

^b Ibid., p. 217.

The liability of the Apostles to persecution is forcibly depicted in the words—

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” (St Matt. x. 16).

The lawfulness of doing good on the Sabbath is illustrated by an *argumentum ad hominem*—

“What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?” (St Matt. xii. 11, 12);

with which we may compare what our Lord said on another occasion—

“The Lord answered him, and said, Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?” (St Luke xiii. 15).

In addition to other characteristics, referred to above when treating of the shepherd, the innocence, mildness, and submission of the sheep made it a suitable metaphor of Christ's people—

“Fear not, little flock” (St Luke xii. 32);

“Feed My sheep” (St John xxi. 17);

their security is set forth by the protection which the Shepherd affords to His sheep—

My sheep “shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (St John x. 28);

while their future position is indicated in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats —

“He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (St Matt. xxv. 33).

The fact of the Jews not believing in and following

our Lord was a significant proof that they were not His people —

“ But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me ” (St John x. 26, 27).

False teachers were like wolves gaining entrance to the fold by disguise to seize the sheep—

“ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves ” (St Matt. vii. 15).

CHAPTER IV.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM AGRICULTURAL LIFE.

PALESTINE, besides being a pastoral country, was a “ land of corn and wine ” (Deut. xxxiii. 28). Dr Porter ^a describes the maritime plain south of Tyre as spread out “ in long reaches of corn-fields and pasture lands several miles inland ” ; and the Plain of Sharon, “ after an interval of bleak downs, as extending in wide-spreading corn-fields and vast expanses of rich, loamy soil southwards almost to the Valley of Gerar.” The valleys which lead up from the plain to the hill country are exceedingly fertile, “ sometimes expanding into rich and beautiful corn-fields.” The upland plains of the central mountain range produce abundant crops of grain ; but this region is one specially adapted for the

^a Art. : “ Palestine,” “ Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature.

cultivation of olives, orchards, and vineyards, which creep along the rounded hillsides in terraces formed by rough walls of stone. Dr Thomson says that the whole plain of Gennesaret, on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, is "one waving field of grain, without hedge, ditch, or fence of any kind to break the even continuity."^a The Plain of Sharon is also largely cultivated for corn. These statements from writers acquainted with the land will be sufficient to introduce our Lord's references to agricultural pursuits and operations.

I. THE HUSBANDMAN AND THE LABOURERS. Every corn-field and vineyard had, of course, its owner, who himself usually farmed the one and planted the other. He represented the great Proprietor and Owner of all, who Himself prepared and laid out the land, engaged the labourers, and sent them into His fields and vineyards—

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest" (St Matt. ix. 38).

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard (St Matt. xx. 1).

"There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard" (St Matt. xxi. 33).

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman" (St John xv. 1).

The labourers—sometimes his sons—employed by the husbandman were typical of those called by God to work in His spiritual kingdom—

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard" (St Matt. xxi. 28).

The fewness of the labourers when the fields

^a Thomson's "Land and the Book," p. 420.

needed reaping indicated the paucity of God's workers—

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (St Matt. ix. 37).

The daily wage received by each labourer was the denarius, the chief Roman coin in circulation in Palestine in our Lord's day. It bore the portrait of Tiberius and an inscription on both sides of his name and titles, and was of the value of $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. of our money.^a This wage is employed in the parable to show that work for God will not go unrewarded—

“Call the labourers and give them their hire. . . . They received every man a penny” (St Matt. xx. 8, 9).

“He that reapeth receiveth wages” (St John iv. 36).

The varied work of the Eastern labourer, including waiting on his master when his out-door work was over—his own rest and refreshment not being enjoyed until all this was done—indicated not only the call to work for God till the time of rest comes, but willingness to do all that is commanded—“patient continuance in well-doing”—and also the acknowledgment that we have no claim to thanks on the ground of merit—that at the best we are unprofitable servants—

“Who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup . . . and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded? Even so ye also . . . say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do” (St Luke xvii. 7-10).

^a See page 127.

2. THE SOIL AND ITS PREPARATION. The field—with its hard pathway running through or at the side of it, with only a thin coating of soil on the rocky substratum, with thorns growing where the plough could not reach, or with deep, good soil—represented both the world of men to whom the Gospel is preached, and the hardened, occupied, shallow, and honest hearts respectively on which the seed is sown—

“The field is the world” (St Matt. xiii. 38).

“As he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them : and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth : and straightway they sprang up, because they had no depth of earth : and when the sun was risen, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns ; and the thorns grew up and choked them : and others fell upon the good ground and yielded fruit” (St Matt. xiii. 4-8 ; comp. 19-23).

The plough and the method of ploughing as seen now in Palestine are probably similar to that which was in use in our Lord's day. “As we rode on,” writes Dr Geikie,^a “many peasants were ploughing, with the plough in one hand, and in the other a long wooden goad, the sharp iron point of which was used to urge forward the lean, small oxen. It was no use for them to kick against it ; their only safety was to hurry on.” “The modern Syrian plough is an agricultural instrument of the simplest construction. It is so light that the ploughman carries it forth on his shoulder to the field, where it is easily drawn by two small oxen. . . . It consists of a crooked piece of wood, armed with an iron point or

^a Geikie, “Holy Land and the Bible,” vol i., p. 41.

shoe ; to this is attached, at one end, a single handle, and at the other a pole. So light is the plough that it would merely glide over the surface of the ground, and cut no furrow, were it not that the ploughman, holding the handle with his left hand, leans heavily upon it. By this means a very shallow furrow is scratched upon the surface. . . . They knew how many an obstacle had to be avoided and the plough steered safely beside it—many a bush, or slab of rock jutting out above the surface of the field, on which the plough might be snapped in two in a moment if the ploughman ceased to give his whole attention to the work ; to look back was not merely to make it impossible to drive a straight furrow, but to endanger the frail wooden plough itself. . . . In like manner he who would seek to follow Christ must not look back in the face of difficulty and distraction.”^a “As little as one who keeps his gaze averted from the place where he has to work with his hand is fit for the plough, so little is one fit to work in the kingdom of God who keeps clinging with his thoughts and wishes to those things which do not belong to the kingdom of God”^b—

“No man, having put his hand on the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (St Luke ix. 62).

The yoke uniting the oxen which drew the plough was at once the symbol of union with and service for Christ—

“Take My yoke upon you” (St Matt. xi. 29).

^a Kitchin, “Models and Objects,” p. 30, 35.

^b Wendt, “Teaching of Jesus,” vol. i., p. 71.

The burdensome teaching of the Pharisees was a yoke too heavy to be borne—

“They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders” (St Matt. xxiii. 4).

The uselessness and painfulness of resisting God’s calls was illustrated by the use of the driver’s goad—

“It is hard for thee to kick against the goad” (Acts xxvi. 14).

3. **SOWING.** “The land around Jerusalem and in the south of Palestine generally, except on the plains, is held in permanent ownership; but in the north and in the Philistine country each cultivator has so much land assigned to him at fixed intervals of a year or two, the amount being measured by a cord of a certain length, and determined by the size of his family and the acreage he can work. . . . The ‘lines may fall’ to him in a place far from his dwelling, so that it will take hours to reach it in the morning or return from it at night, or they may fall on a bare, rocky spot, where his utmost toil will be unproductive.”^a The *going forth* of the sower to sow gains considerable force when this is remembered.

The sower represents our Lord Himself and those whom He sends forth with His Gospel—

“Behold, the sower went forth to sow” (St. Matt. xiii. 3).

“He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man” (St Matt. xiii. 38).

The seed sown is the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which by the Gospel is preached unto men (1 Pet. i. 23-25)—

“The seed is . . . the Word of God” (St Luke viii. 11).

^a Geikie, “Holy Land and the Bible,” vol. i., p. 152.

The malicious sowing of poisonous darnel among the wheat, which is indistinguishable from it until the ear is formed, and the roots of which become so intertwined with the corn as to make it almost impossible to uproot one without the other, became a striking symbol of the work of the devil in counterfeiting the work of Christ, of the mixed character of the visible Church, and of the final separation--

"While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. . . . Let both grow together until the harvest" (St Matt. xiii. 25, 26, 30; comp. 36-42).

4. GROWTH OF THE SEED. The decay of the seed in order to the multiplication of the corn is referred to by our Lord as affording an analogy of the law of all life: that life comes from death--

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (St John xii. 24).

The secret, silent growth of the seed, apart from human effort, and its progressive development, illustrate the "secret, invisible energy of the Divine word, that it has a life of its own, and will unfold itself according to the law of its own being"--^a

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear" (St Mark iv. 26-29).

5. THE HARVEST AND THE REAPERS. "The harvest in Palestine lasts for weeks, one kind of

^a Trench, "Parables," p. 288.

grain ripening before another, and different levels having a different time for reaping. In the Plain of Philistia it begins in April and ends in June ; but in the deep-sunk and hot plains of the Jordan the barley harvest begins at the end of March, and that of wheat two or three weeks later.”^α

The harvest comes at its appointed time, but in spiritual things it may follow immediately upon sowing—

“Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest” (St John iv. 35).

Harvest brings joy to the sower and the reaper, both in the natural and the spiritual fields—

“He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together” (St John iv. 36).

As in the harvest of Nature, so also in the spiritual harvest, the sower is not always the reaper ; and in both the disappointed hopes of the sower have been at times realised by others—

“One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured : others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour” (St John iv. 37, 38).

But the harvest is also a suggestive figure of the ingathering at the end of the world—

“The harvest is the end of the world” (St Matt. xiii. 39).

The reapers are both the gatherers of souls into Christ's kingdom and also the angels who will

^α Geikie, “Holy Land and the Bible,” vol. i., p. 146.

minister at the resurrection and at the final Judgment—

“I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured” (St John iv. 38).

“The reapers are angels. . . . The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall east them into the furnace of fire” (St Matt. xiii. 39, 41, 42).

“The sickle is still in use for reaping, as it was in Bible times, the reaper gathering the grain into his left arm as he cuts it. Following him comes the binder, who makes up into large bundles—not, as with us, into sheaves—the little heaps of the reaper”^a—

“When the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come” (St Mark iv. 29).

The sinner’s hard thoughts of God take the form of representing Him as “a harsh, unreasonable despot . . . Who would reap what others have sown, and gather with the rake where others have winnowed with the fan, thus unrighteously entering on the fruits of other men’s toils”—^b

“Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not seatter” (St Matt. xxv. 24).

God’s love and care for man are illustrated by His feeding the birds without their sowing or reaping—

“Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them” (St Matt. vi. 26).

^a Geikie, “Holy Land and the Bible,” vol. i., p. 145.

^b Trench, “Parables,” p. 230.

The plentiful harvest is a symbol of the success of the Gospel, and its varying productiveness the "different degrees of fidelity in those that receive the truth, according to which they bring forth fruit unto God more or less abundantly."^a "We have often counted sixty grains in an ear, and even a hundred is sometimes reached; and when we remember that several ears may spring from a single seed, we may see that a hundred-fold under favourable circumstances would be no excessive produce"^b —

"The harvest truly is plenteous" (St Matt. ix. 37; St Luke x. 2).

"Yielded fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty" (St Matt. xiii. 8, 23).

The winnowing of wheat is akin to the purpose of temptation, to sift the wheat from the chaff. "The chaff, grain, and 'teben,' which have gradually been gathered into a great central mound, are thrown up against the wind with a wooden fork, sometimes with two prongs, but more commonly with five or six. . . . A sieve is also used now, generally by women; a light, half-oval wooden frame, about a yard across, with a coarse hair or palm-fibre bottom, the winnower holding it by the round side, and tossing up the grain from it against the wind"^c —

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat" (St Luke xxii. 31).

The worldly man's prosperity and his laying up

^a Trench, "Parables," p. 82.

^b Tristram, "Natural History of the Bible," p. 489.

^c Geikie, "Holy Land and the Bible," vol. i., p. 150.

treasure for this life is illustrated in the Parable of the Rich Fool—

“What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods” (St Luke xii. 17, 18).



Whose Fan is in his Hand

The failure of the world to satisfy man's highest needs finds an illustration in the famine, such as occasionally visited even the land of "wheat and barley"—

“There arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want” (St Luke xv. 14).

6. THE VINEYARD AND THE VINE. “Palestine is peculiarly fitted for the grape, its sunny

lime-stone slopes, through which the rains quickly percolate, having a dry subsoil. The heat by day and the heavy mist by night make it the very home in which the plant delights."^a "The vines are planted in wide rows, and are simply so many single stems bent at a sharp angle with the ground and cut off when four or five feet long, the end being supported by a short forked stick, so that the shoots may hang clear of the soil. There are towers for the 'keepers of the vineyards,' stone buildings of no great size, by which a lookout can be kept on all sides; there is also a shelter for the husbandman, the vineyards in many parts being far from any village."^b

The vineyard, hedged in by a wall of rough stones or by a fence of thorns or wild aloes, is a type of God's kingdom, fenced in by Divine institutions, and let out to the Jewish teachers to cultivate, but because of their unfaithfulness transferred to the Gentiles—

"There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen" (St Matt. xxi. 33, 41).

The vine was a type of our Lord Himself, and the branches of His people, the connection between the two being an indication of the intimate union between Him and them, as well as the cause of their fruitfulness—

"I am the true Vine. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can

^a Geikie, "Holy Land and the Bible," vol. i., p. 317.

^b Ibid., vol. i., p. 314.

ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from Me ye can do nothing" (St John xv. 1, 4, 5).

"No tree requires such constant and severe pruning as the vine. We know that in the vineyards of France the whole wood is cut back to the stump every year, and in like manner in the East only three or four leaders are left from the top of the main stem, which is about five or six feet high, so soon as the vintage is over. . . ." This has its parallel in the discipline of trial and affliction in human life—

"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit" (St John xv. 2).

After the vintage "the wine is drawn off, and stored in large earthenware jars half buried in the earth, or in leather bottles," the latter made of the whole skin of a goat. If these were old, dry, and inelastic, the wine, if still working, would burst the skins. New wine therefore needed new skins. Our Lord employed this well-known fact to indicate that the new and joyous spirit of Christianity could not be confined within the old and worn-out system of Judaism—

"Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved" (St Matt. ix. 17).

We may conclude these references to agricultural illustrations by quoting our Lord's allusion to the law of Nature, that every tree produces after its

kind, as holding good in the spiritual kingdom, and that these fruits test the character both of teachers and of their teaching—

“By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (St Matt. vii. 16, 17).

CHAPTER V.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM TRADE LIFE.

“AMONGST the Jews the contempt for manual labour, which was one of the characteristics of heathenism, did not exist. On the contrary, it was deemed a religious duty, frequently and most earnestly insisted upon, to learn some trade, provided that it did not minister to luxury, or tend to lead away from personal observance of the law.”^a “It was required that every rabbi should learn a trade by which to support himself. ‘He who does not teach his son a trade,’ says Rabbi Jehuda, ‘is much the same as if he taught him to be a thief.’”^b In all probability our Lord followed the trade of Joseph; the Jews of Nazareth said of Him, “Is not this the carpenter?” (St Mark vi. 23). Our Lord’s Apostles apparently were mostly handicraftsmen.

The particular trades which were followed in our

^a Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,” vol. i., p. 252.

^b Geikie, “Life of Christ,” vol. i., p. 78.

Lord's day comprised workers in brass, copper, and iron, goldsmiths and silversmiths, carpenters and masons, potters, shoemakers, tailors, and fullers. For the most part baking, weaving, and spinning were done at home by the women of the household. Fish was a staple article of food—there was a fish-market in Jerusalem—and many fishermen were employed not only on the Lake of Galilee, but on the Jordan and on the sea coast.

Some of these trades were alluded to by our Lord, furnishing point and illustration to His teaching.

I. THE FISHERMAN. Four at least of our Lord's Apostles were fishermen, who fished with the hook (St Matt. xvii. 27), and also with the casting-net and drag-net. It was as Simon and Andrew were "casting a net into the sea" that they were called by our Lord to follow Him. Their earthly calling was a preparation for and a parable of the spiritual work which they were to take up. The patience and skill needed for successful fishing were qualities which they would need in the higher calling of which that was a type.

"It is *men* and not poor fishes which henceforth (Peter) shall take ; and he shall take them *for life*, and not, as he had hitherto taken his meaner prey, only for death." ^a —

"Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (St Matt. iv. 19).

"From henceforth thou shalt catch men" (St Luke v. 10).

The disappointments which attend the fisherman's craft they might still experience, but in obedience to

^a Trench, "Miracles," p. 144.

Christ's command, and in the use of right methods, they would find success—

“Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught” (St Luke v. 4).

“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find” (St John xxi. 6).

The kingdom of heaven is compared to the seine or drag-net, which is thus described^a :—“Corks attached to the upper edge keep it at the surface, while the lead weights at the lower edge cause it to sink, till the net stands upright in the water. It is taken to sea in two boats, and when ‘shot,’ extended in a line with a boat at each end. The two boats then gradually approach each other, so as to bring the net into a semi-circle, and finally their two ends are thus at length brought to the shore, and the net is hauled in, enclosing the fish within its woven walls”—

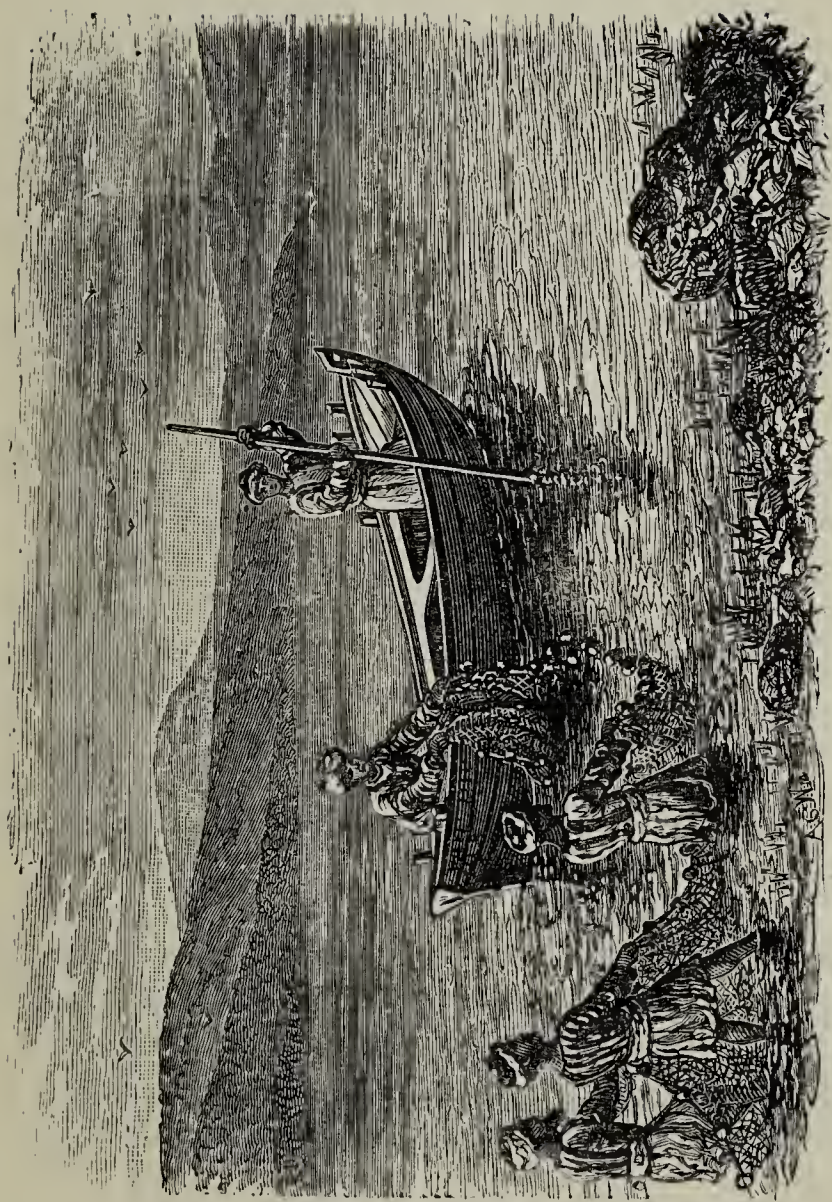
“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was filled, they drew up on the shore” (St Matt. xiii. 47, 48).

The subsequent sorting of the fish—the “bad” meaning “not the putrid or corrupt, but the unclean, those forbidden by the law as wanting fins and scales, and those rejected from prejudice or custom”^b finds its parallel in the separation which will take place at the day of Judgment—

“And they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous” (St Matt. xiii. 48, 49).

^a Kitchin, “Models and Objects,” p. 85.

^b Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p. 290.



Casting the Draw-Net

2. **THE TAILOR.** One allusion our Lord makes to the tailor when He taught His disciples that the attempt to patch the old Jewish system with the new principles of the Christian religion ; or the old un-renewed life of sinful men with some of the outward habits of the Christian religion, would be as foolish as to patch a worn garment with a piece of new cloth—a worse rent would ensue—

“ No man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment : for that which should fill it up taketh from the garment, and a worse rent is made ” (St Matt. ix. 16).

3. **THE FULLER** is incidentally alluded to in the passage just quoted, for the “ undressed cloth ” is “ that which has not passed through the fuller’s hands—it was new and undressed, in its freshest and strongest state. Such a patch sewn upon a weak part of the old cloak would, on the first strain, tear the cloth near it.”^a The fuller’s work consisted in cleansing the cloth from grease, etc., by the use of some alkali, and in bleaching it (*c.p.* St Mark ix. 3).

4. **THE BUILDER.** The “ application,” as we may term it, of the Sermon on the Mount forcibly compares two classes of hearers to wise and foolish builders—the one building upon the hard rock at the opening of some torrent bed ; the other upon the level sand brought down by the winter’s rain, and liable to be washed away by another storm—

“ Every one therefore which heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock. . . . And every one that hear-

^a Plumptre, “ New Testament Commentary,” *in loc.*

eth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (St Matt. vii. 24-27).

The need of "counting the cost" of a Christian profession in the building up of a "holy life reared upon the one Foundation," is enforced by the illustration of the builder who began to build and was not able to finish—

"Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (St Luke xiv. 28-30).

5. THE PEARL MERCHANT. "The caprices of luxury in the Roman Empire had given a prominence to pearls as an article of commerce which they had never had before, and have probably never had since. . . . Such a merchant seeking them, either by the shores of the Mediterranean, or as brought by caravans from the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean, must have been a familiar presence to the fishermen of Capernaum." ^a And our Lord instances such as a picture of one seeking the "Pearl of great price," and at any personal cost possessing himself of Him—

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (St Matt. xiii. 45, 46).

To illustrate the lesson that holy things—the pearls of Divine truth—must not be brought into contempt by being unwisely forced on those in

^a Ibid.

whom they would only excite ridicule and bitter opposition—and upon whom, therefore, the truth would be absolutely thrown away, our Lord said—

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you” (St Matt. vii. 6).

6. BUSINESS DEALINGS IN GENERAL. The excuses made by men for refusing God's gracious invitations are represented by the conduct of those who are so absorbed by the pride of worldly possessions and the cares of business that they churlishly beg off from fulfilling their promises—

“They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused” (St Luke xiv. 18, 19).

The steward who wronged his master and, when called to account, remitted to one debtor a half and to another one-fifth of what he owed, in order to provide for his future, and whose shrewdness in thus showing foresight was commended by his master, is taken by our Lord to show “the necessity of care and faithfulness, of prudence and wisdom, in so managing the affairs and interests and possessions of this life as not to lose hereafter their heritage of the eternal riches” ^a—

“There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. . . . And his lord commended the unrighteous steward, because he had done wisely: for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. And I

^a Farrar, “Life of Christ,” vol. ii., p. 125.

say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles" (St Luke xvi. 1-9).

The impossibility of combining the service of the world with the service of God is illustrated by the saying—

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (St Matt. vi. 24).

The measuring of corn afforded an easy method of cheating. But a professional tester was provided to guard against this. "Sitting down on the ground, of course cross-legged, this functionary shovels the wheat or barley into the measure, which is called a 'timneh,' using his hands to do so. When it is quite full he shakes the 'timneh' smartly, that the grain may settle, then fills it to the brim again and twists it half round with a swift jerk as it lies on the ground, repeating both processes till it is once more full to the top. This done, he presses the contents with his hands to fill up any still vacant space, till at last, when it will hold no more, he raises a cone on the top, stopping when it begins to run over at the sides; and this only is thought to be good measure."^a Our Lord points to this when referring to the law of retribution, that as we have done to others it shall be done to us—

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you" (St Matt. vii. 2).

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure,

^a Geikie, "Holy Land and the Bible," vol. i., p. 288.

pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom" (St Luke vi. 38).

Men in those days, as in our day, ran into debt. Our Lord regards this as a type of man's relation as a sinner to his Divine Lord, and the free cancelling of debt as an illustration of God's free remission of sins, while the willingness to forgive our debtors is a condition of His willingness to forgive us—

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. . . . For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father, forgive your trespasses" (St Matt. vi. 12, 15).

"So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" (St Matt. xviii. 35).

The greater spirit of gratitude naturally felt by one forgiven a large debt over one who only owed a small sum is taken by our Lord to illustrate the deeper love to God felt by one who is conscious of the sense of his sins, when those sins are forgiven, than would be felt by one in whom that deep sense of his indebtedness to God is absent—

"A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed 500 pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them, therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged" (St Luke vii. 41-43).

The use of capacities and opportunities in the advancement of Christ's kingdom finds an illustration in the employment of capital advanced to men wherewith to carry on their business—

"He called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come" (St Luke xix. 13).

"Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents" (St Matt. xxv. 16).

CHAPTER VI.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CIVIL AND NATIONAL LIFE.

I. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. The Gospels throw some light upon the condition of the people in regard to the civil law and the administration of justice. We read of personal violence, robbery, cheating, lying, and slander ; of creditors and debtors ; of the great council of the nation, the Sanhedrin ; of judges and their officers ; of the punishments of crimes and of prisons. From some of these our Lord drew illustrations.

“Josephus more than once mentions the extent to which Palestine in those latter days was infested with banditti ; and from St Jerome we learn that the road from (Jerusalem to Jericho) was at one place called the Red, or the Bloody Way, from the blood which had been shed there.”^a The scene of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is laid there ; and the man who fell among robbers, while, in the first place, representing all whose condition calls for the exhibition of true “neighbourly” feelings and deeds, may also be taken as a type of man despoiled by Satan whom He Whom they called a “Samaritan” came to succour and to save—

“A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead” (St Luke x. 30).

When the lord of the vineyard sent his servants to receive the rent of the vineyard in kind they ill-

^a Trench, “Parables,” p. 313.

treated them, and even slew his son, whom he subsequently sent. This is a picture of the way in which the Jews acted towards God's prophets, and at last against His beloved Son—

“The husbandman took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. . . . Afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But . . . they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him” (St Matt. xxi. 35-39).

The Sanhedrin, which consisted of seventy-one members drawn from the three classes of chief priests, scribes, and elders, with the High Priest as president, was a civil as well as an ecclesiastical tribunal. Our Lord alludes to it when enforcing the law of love—

“Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment : but I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [an expression of contempt], shall be in danger of the Council ; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool [a Hebrew expression of condemnation], shall be in danger of the hell of fire” (St Matt. v. 21, 22).

The importance of a friendly settlement with an adversary, even at the last moment before a judicial decision is given, is used by our Lord to inculcate the spirit of reconciliation with others by confession and an endeavour to make amends for wrong-doing before the final Judgment—

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art with him in the way ; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison” (St Matt. v. 25).

Our Lord enforces the spirit of love and magnanimity when He says—

“Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away [by process of law] thy coat, let him have thy cloke also” (St Matt. v. 39, 40).

The unjust judge, who gives the widow redress simply because of her importunity, illustrates, not of course the character of our “righteous judge,” but the willingness of God to hear the earnest prayer of those who call upon Him—

“Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night?” (St Luke xviii. 2-8).

Our Lord taught the lesson of the non-interference by spiritual authorities with the sphere of the civil law—in reply to the question of one who inopportunistically desired Him to act as Arbitrator between him and his brother—and warned at the same time against a covetous spirit—

“Man, who made me a Judge or a Divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness” (St Luke xii. 14, 15).

The punishment inflicted after trial at law represents the final punishment of the wicked—

“Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the last farthing” (St Matt. v. 26).

“Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment” (St Matt. xii. 36).

“He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (St John v. 27).

“These shall go away into eternal punishment” (St Matt. xxv. 46).

That the principle of the final Judgment will be equitable, and that “man’s knowledge is the measure of his responsibilities,” is indicated by the practice of earthly courts—

“That servant, which knew his lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes” (St Luke xii. 47, 48).

There was nothing so galling to the feelings of the Jews as the knowledge that they were a subject race. By bitter experience they knew what it was for “the rulers of the Gentiles to lord it over them.” When our Lord would correct the false views of His disciples as to the nature of His kingdom and the spirit of rivalry and ambition which they exhibited, He does so by way of contrast—

“Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant” (St Matt. xx. 25, 26).

2. THE COLLECTION AND PAYMENT OF TAXES. The most keenly felt and most bitterly resented of all the burdens of the Roman dominion over Palestine was the imposition of taxation. ‘The systematic and direct taxation of the country by Rome was an inextinguishable subject of hatred and strife between the rulers and the ruled. . . . The chief imposts demanded were two—a poll and

a land tax, the former an income tax on all not embraced by the latter . . . Both imposts were in the hands of 'publicans,' who bought the right of collecting the taxes for five years from the censors at Rome. These publicans farmed the revenue from the State, giving security for the payment of a fixed sum from the province whose taxes they bought. There were, however, extraordinary taxes and local imposts besides the two great ones. . . . The customs and excise duties, moreover, were levied for the imperial government, and the tolls on bridges and roads, the octroi at the gates of towns, and the custom-houses at the boundaries of districts or provinces, gave additional room for arbitrary oppression. . . . The Roman knights who took contracts for provinces, sublet them by districts to others, and these again had sub-contractors to smaller and smaller amounts. The worst result was inevitable where self interest was so deeply involved." ^a The country was ruined by such exactions, of which we find illustrations in our Lord's parables.

The question most in debate among the Rabbis was as to the lawfulness of paying the Roman taxes. To entangle our Lord, either with the Romans or with the multitude, the Pharisees and Herodians, with a semblance of difference, combine to ask His opinion on this crucial question. But asking for the coin (a *denarius*) which they paid as the Roman capitation tax, and pointing to the image and superscription,^b He illustrated man's duty both to the *de*

^a Geikie, "Life of Christ," vol. i., pp. 279, 280.

^b See page 39.

facto government, and also to God as spiritual King, by the words so full of teaching—

“Render, therefore, unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (St Matt. xxii. 21).

Our Lord could hardly have illustrated the all-embracing character of His Church more forcibly than (1) by calling “Matthew the publican” from the receipt of custom to be one of His Apostles ; (2) by lodging at the house of Zacchæus, “a chief publican,” at Jericho ; or (3) by saying—

“The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” (St Matt. xxi. 31).

CHAPTER VII.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS.

OUR Lord, unlike his forerunner, John the Baptist, did not live an ascetic, secluded life. As a member of a human family in the “cottage home of Nazareth,” and afterwards in His ministry, He associated with men and did not disdain to share in their home and social life. He went to the marriage feast of Cana, to the home of Peter at Capernaum, to the supper of Simon the Pharisee, and He was a frequent guest in the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany.

From what we have already seen of our Lord’s practice of drawing illustrations from what was familiar to Him and to His hearers, we should naturally expect to find allusions to the social life

and customs of the people. In this we are not disappointed. It has been well said by Dr Geikie : "The Gospels show throughout that nothing escaped the eye of Jesus. . . . The sports of childhood ; the rejoicings of riper life ; the bride and the bridegroom ; the mourner and the dead ; the castles and palaces of princes, and the silken robes of the great ; the rich owners of field and vineyard ; the steward, the travelling merchant, the beggar, the debtor ; the toil of the sower and of the labourer in the vineyard, or of the fisher on the lake ; the sweat of the worker ; the sighs of those in chains, or in the dungeon, were seen, and heard, and remembered. Nor did He rest merely in superficial observation. The possessions, joys, and sufferings of men, their words and acts, their customs, their pride or humility, pretence or sincerity, failings or merits, were treasured as materials from which, one day, to point them to ourselves." ^a

We have now to trace some of these allusions to social life and customs which our Lord employed as illustrations of Divine truth or of moral duty.

I. MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

Our Lord, in selecting a marriage feast as the occasion of His first miracle, reconsecrated the marriage relationship, and made it a symbol of "the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church." His parables expressed the same truth, that the marriage state is a type of the intimate and close relationship which exists between God and His people.

Among the Jews the espousals and the actual

^a "Life of Christ," vol. i., p. 240.

marriage were separated by an interval of time, generally twelve months, and the betrothal was celebrated by a feast in the house of the bride. Our Lord employs these facts to illustrate His own position. He was the Bridegroom, and His ministry was the feast of the espousals, and was therefore a time of joy. But the marriage itself, as representing "the heavenly life of the perfected kingdom of God,"^a will not, as Trench remarks, "be celebrated till the end of the present age (Rev. xix. 7)."^b

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son" (St Matt. xxii. 2).

"Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast" (St Matt. ix. 15).

On the occasion of the marriage itself, which took place at night, the friends and attendants went forth to meet the bridegroom. "The order of the bridal procession appears to have been as follows:—The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, 'the children of the bridechamber' (St Matt. ix. 15), 'the friends of the bridegroom' (St John iii. 29; see Judges xiv. 11) went to the house of the bride and led her with pomp and gladness (1 Macc. ix. 37-39) to his own home, or, where that was too narrow to receive the guests, to some large apartment provided for the occasion. She was accompanied from her father's house by her youthful friends and companions (Ps. xlv. 14), while others of these, the

^a Wendt, "Teaching of Jesus," vol. i., p. 122.

^b Trench, "Parables," p. 222.

‘virgins’ of the parable, joined the procession at some convenient point, and entered with the rest of the bridal company into the hall of feasting (Cant. iii. 11).^a These ceremonies furnish the ground-work of our Lord’s Parable of the Ten Virgins—

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (St Matt. xxv. 1).

The uncertainty as to the hour of the coming of the bridegroom, and the need, therefore, of being in a continual state of watchfulness, illustrate the duty of the Church in regard to the time of our Lord’s second coming, while the unreadiness of the foolish virgins depicts the condition of those who are not expecting it—

“The foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him,” &c. (St Matt. xxv. 3-10).

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him” (St Luke xii. 35, 36).

2. HOSPITALITY. Hospitality is eminently an Oriental practice. “When travelling in the East no one need ever scruple to go into the best house of any Arab village to which he comes, and he will always be received with profuse and gratuitous hos-

^a Trench, “Parables,” p 247

pitality.”^a “The ancient Jew, like the modern Arab, held it a reflection on a community if a passing wayfarer was not made some one’s guest. To bring water at once to wash the traveller’s feet, dusty with the Eastern sandals, was an act of courtesy which it showed a churlish spirit to omit. Food and lodging for himself and his beasts, if he had any, were provided, and he was regarded as under the special protection of his host.”^b

To this open hospitality our Lord told His twelve Apostles, and afterwards the seventy, to trust when He sent them forth to preach the Gospel—

“Into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go forth” (St Matt. x. 11).

“And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give” (St Luke x. 7).

The hatred of the Samaritans towards the Jews was strikingly shown by their refusal to entertain our Lord, and it excited the perhaps natural indignation of the “Sons of Thunder,” which our Lord rebuked, and at the same time inculcated the lesson of a spirit of meekness, even in the face of such an act of rudeness.—

“They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He were going to Jerusalem . . . and they went to another village” (St Luke ix. 52-56).

To eat salt with another was to partake of his hospitality, and among the Arabs, even at the present day, one who has eaten salt with them is re-

^a Farrar, “Life of Christ,” Vol. i., p. 363.

^b Geikie, “Life of Christ,” Vol. i., p. 120.

garded as a friend whom they are under the most binding of obligations to protect. To this custom our Lord refers when He urges His disciples to be at peace with one another—

“ Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another ”
(St Mark ix. 50).

3. **FEASTS.** It was customary in the East to give invitations to feasts some time beforehand ; and then, when the day drew near, to send to those who had accepted them to say that the feast was at hand. The custom still prevails in the Lebanon. “ If a sheikh, bey, or emir invites, he always sends a servant to call you at the proper time. The servant often repeats the very formula mentioned in St Luke xiv. 17 : ‘ Tefüddülû, el ’asha hâder ’—‘ Come, for the supper is ready.’ The fact that this custom is mainly confined to the wealthy and to the nobility is in strict agreement with the parable. . . . It is true now, as then, that to refuse is a high insult to the maker of the feast, nor would such excuses as those in the parable be more acceptable to a Druse emir than they were to the lord of this ‘ great supper.’ ” ^a

Our Lord employs this as illustrative of the Feast of the New Covenant—of God’s invitations to it delivered by the prophets, and repeated by John the Baptist, the Twelve, the seventy, and by Himself—

“ A certain king . . . sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast ; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner ; my

^a Thomson, “ Land and the Book,” p. 125.

oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready ; come to the marriage feast " (St Matt. xxii. 3, 4).

" A certain man made a great supper ; and he bade many : and he sent forth his servants at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready " (St Luke xiv. 16, 17).

The custom of welcoming the guest with a kiss, and washing his feet and anointing his head with oil, form the ground-work of our Lord's remarks on the absence of these acts of courtesy when Simon the Pharisee invited Him to his house—

" I entered thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet . . . thou gavest Me no kiss . . . My head with oil thou didst not anoint " (St Luke vii. 44-46).

At the Last Supper He, as the Host, washed the disciples' feet, both as a symbol of the need of daily cleansing from sin and as an example to them to serve one another—

" He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit " (St John xiii. 10).

" If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet " (St John xiii. 14).

" The custom, which still exists in the East, and is mentioned from the earliest times in the Old Testament, of presenting festival garments is well known " (Gen. xlv. 22 ; Judges xiv. 12 ; 2 Kings v. 22).^a It furnishes our Lord with an illustration of the righteousness which God provides for us in Christ, and which we must put on, in order to find acceptance at the heavenly feast—

" When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment : and he saith unto

^a Thomson, " Land and the Book," p 127.

him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" (St Matt. xxii. 11, 12).

The custom of all eating out of the same dish, sometimes, in the case of the rich, with silver spoons, but more frequently by the bread being dipped in the stew, still prevails. "The very polite *à la mode* Oriental will tear up the best bits, and either lay them next you, or insist on putting them into your mouth. I have had this done for me by digits not particularly fair, or even clean."^a This symbol of friendship our Lord gave at the Last Supper—

"He that hath dipped his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me" (St Matt. xxvi. 23).

"When He had dipped the sop, He taketh and giveth it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot" (St John xiii. 26).

4. SALUTATIONS. "When two men meet they lay the right hand on the heart, then raise it to the brow, or the mouth, and only after this take hold of each other's right hand. Then follows a string of sounding words, expressive of intense mutual interest in each other's fathers, grandfathers, and ancestry generally, with numberless other inquiries before they bid good day and pass on. The insincerity of such protracted greetings, the waste of time, and, above all, the distraction from the mission of the disciples which would inevitably arise, sufficiently explain our Lord's command to His messengers"^b —

"Salute no man on the way" (St Luke x. 4).

5. JOURNEYING. "The directions not to carry either purse, scrip, shoes, or staff, were as strange to Eastern habits as the forbidding of salutations.

^a Thomson, "Land and the Book," p. 127

^b Geikie, "Holy Land and the Bible," Vol. i., p. 328.

When journeying any distance from home, the Oriental puts some of the thin leathery bread of the country, some dried figs, a few olives, and perhaps a little cheese into his 'scrip' or 'wallet'—a leather bag made of the whole skin of a kid—which hangs from his shoulders, and with this simple fare, and some water from a fountain, he satisfies his hunger and thirst." Another motive led the Jews in our Lord's day to carry this "scrip" filled with eatables legally "clean," and that was to avoid food which had been prepared by any one not a Jew. "Hence, each individual of the thousands whom our Lord twice miraculously fed had a 'basket,' which was just this scrip. . . . That the disciples were not to take this inseparable accompaniment of their countrymen with them was a deadly blow at the Levitical purism of the day"^a—

"Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey" (St Matt. x. 9, 10).

"They took up that which remained over of the broken pieces twelve baskets full" (St Matt. xiv. 20).

To shake off the dust was a symbol of righteous indignation (Acts xiii. 51), and "the Jewish maxim, that even the very dust of a heathen land brought defilement with it, added to its significance. It was a protest in act, declaring (as our Lord declares in words) that the city or house which did not receive the messenger of the Christ was below the level even of the Gentiles"^b—

"Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet" (St Matt. x. 14).

^a Geikie, "Holy Land and the Bible," Vol. i., p. 329.

^b Plumptre, "Ellicott's Commentary," *in loc.*

CHAPTER VIII.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM RELIGIOUS LIFE AND CEREMONIES.

OUR Lord's teaching contains many allusions to the religious life and habits of the people, and particularly to the external legalism of the scribes and Pharisees. "Here He encountered a form of righteousness which bore the most pretentious appearance of piety and regard for the fulfilment of the will of God, but whose leading motives were in reality vanity and self-seeking, and its results human self-complacency. Jesus saw in it a mighty hindrance to their attaining the ideal and practice of piety belonging to the true kingdom of God."^a He dealt with this false view of religion in the sternest manner, and at the same time set forth the true principles of righteousness and of the religious life in clear and definite language; and in each case we find Him employing illustrations which must have made His meaning clear, even to the most obtuse.

I. PRAYER. Attendance at the Temple for the purpose of prayer and the attitude of standing in prayer are both illustrated in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—

"Two men went up into the Temple to pray. . . . The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself . . . and the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," &c. (St Luke xviii. 10, 11).

^a Wendt, "Teaching of Jesus," Vol i., p 278.

Ostentatious religion which sought to parade itself before men was rebuked by our Lord when He pointed to the custom of men resorting to the synagogues for private devotion, and of praying publicly in the open places of the city, as well as making long prayers, with needless repetitions, simply to attract notice—

“When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (St Matt. vi. 5).

“Which . . . for a pretence make long prayers” (St Mark xii. 40).

As illustrating this hypocritical spirit, our Lord pointed to the Pharisees, who enlarged the fringes of the “Tallith”—a woollen shawl with fringes, which is put on at morning prayer—and “made broad their phylacteries”—that is, either the little boxes (which contained texts written on vellum), or the straps by which they were fastened to the arm and the forehead at the time of prayer, were made larger than the usual size, in order to compel observation—

“All their works they do for to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments” (St Matt. xxiii. 5).

The essence of true prayer consists in its being the outpouring of the soul to God; and our Lord laid stress on this as necessitating the withdrawal of the mind from all external subjects by alluding to the “inner chamber” of the house—into which, for example, Ben-hadad fled to hide himself from

the King of Israel (1 Kings xx. 30 ; compare also 1 Kings xxii. 25)—

“Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret” (St Matt. vi. 6).



Phylacteries.

The efficacy of believing prayer in removing mountains of difficulty was illustrated by our Lord on the Mount of Olives—

“Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith . . . even if ye

shall say to this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (St Matt. xxi. 21, 22).

Importunity in prayer is strikingly enforced both by the story of the man who, at midnight, beseeches a neighbour to give him bread for a friend who has arrived unexpectedly; and also by the Parable of the Unjust Judge, in which the woman obtains justice simply by the persistency of her appeal. If a neighbour will rise from bed, and an unjust judge will grant a woman's request because of the importunity of the demand, will not God do so even more readily?—

"Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you" (St Luke xi. 8, 9).

"There was in a city a judge . . . and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself . . . Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And the Lord saith, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him night and day, and He is long suffering over them? I say unto you that He will avenge them speedily" (St Luke xviii. 1-8).

The willingness of our heavenly Father to give to His children in answer to their prayers is illustrated by our Lord's allusion to the conduct of earthly parents towards their children—

'What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone, or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how

to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (St Matt. vii. 9, 10).

2. ALMS-GIVING AND TITHES. The "parade of benevolence" was condemned by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He brings forward certain exhibitions of this fatal habit which He must have observed in the practice of the Jews of his day—

"When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogue and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (St Matt. vi. 2).

The casuistical evasion of the obligations of the Fifth Commandment by devoting, or pretending to devote, property to God and call it "Corban" (that is, "consecrated" or "given to God"), and pleading this as a reason for refusing to render help to needy parents, is referred to by our Lord as an illustration of the manner in which God's Commandments were "made of none effect"—

"Ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or to his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honour his father. And ye have made void the word of God, because of your tradition" (St Matt. xv. 5, 6).

Our Lord taught His disciples that the true spirit of acceptable alms-giving lay in its motive—love to man—and not the love of praise. To illustrate this He quotes what was probably a proverbial expression of the day—

"When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and

thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (St Matt. vi. 3, 4).

The custom of pressing down and then piling up in the shape of a cone the measure of corn, and of emptying it into the wide folds of an Eastern dress (comp. Ruth iii. 15), is referred to by our Lord to indicate the recompense which liberal and spontaneous giving should receive—

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (St Luke vi. 38).

Our Lord's commendation of the offering of the widow's "two mites," in contrast with the larger gifts of the rich, illustrates the necessity of self-denial as necessary to acceptable alms-giving—

"And He looked up, and saw the rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow cast in more than they all: for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had" (St Luke xxi. 1-4).

3. FASTING. The same Pharisaical spirit, which our Lord noted and rebuked in the matter of prayer and of alms-giving, He also observed and condemned in that of fasting. They fasted openly, often for fasting's sake, and to gain thereby either the favour of God or the applause of men. And our Lord refers to this to illustrate the futility of such external acts in themselves, and to inculcate the opposite spirit—

"When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of

men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret" (St Matt. vi. 16-18).

Whereas Moses appointed one great fast day in the year (the Day of Atonement), the Pharisees fasted twice each week, and sought thereby to make God their debtor, of which we find an illustration in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus. . . . I fast twice in the week" (St Luke xviii. 11, 12).

4. **SABBATH OBSERVANCE.** The scribes had overlaid the Fourth Commandment with many burdensome and fanciful rules; and our Lord, without saying or doing anything which might lead men to regard that Commandment as abrogated, sought to enforce its spiritual and benevolent purposes by working miracles of healing on the Sabbath day, and by allusions to duties which even these legalists allowed to be done on that day, illustrating thereby the truth that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (St Mark ii. 27). That works of religion, mercy, and necessity, were no breaches of the true Sabbath law He showed by the following illustrations—

"Ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man receiveth circumcision on the Sabbath, that the law of Moses may not be broken, are ye wroth with Me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath?" (St John vii. 22, 23).

"Have ye not read in the law how that on the Sabbath day the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless?" (St Matt. xii. 5).

“What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day” (St Matt. xii. 11, 12).

“Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?” (St Luke xiii. 15).

5. HYPOCRISY. We have already noticed how our Lord condemned hypocrisy in regard to prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. It was also further denounced by Him in the most scathing words He ever employed, as He enumerated other examples of their self-righteousness and external legalism. St Matt. xxiii. is full of such denunciation, from which we may quote the following—

“They love place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues” (St Matt. xxiii. 6).

“Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess” (St Matt. xxiii. 25).

“Ye are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones,” &c. (St Matt. xxiii. 27).

“Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous” (St Mark xxiii. 29).

The scrupulous care with which they ceremoniously washed themselves before meals (St Mark vii. 3, 4) is regarded by our Lord as a further sign of their hypocrisy—

“This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (St Mark vii. 6, 7).

The spirit which made much of little and external duties, to the disparagement of what was infinitely greater, finds an illustration in the punctiliousness of the Pharisees as exhibited in the scrupulous payment of tithe upon trifling garden herbs, while they neglected concerns of vital moment—

“Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith ; but these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone ” (St Matt. xxiii. 23).

The same spirit is strikingly condemned by what may have been a proverb of the day—

“Ye blind guides, which strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel ” (St Matt. xxiii. 24).

Once again He employs a proverb to illustrate how blind they were to their own great faults, while they were keen-sighted to the lesser failings of others—

“Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . . Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye ” (St Matt. vii. 3-5).

6. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES. The Temple—the centre of the religious life of the people—was referred to by our Lord as a type of His body—

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . He spake of the temple of His body ” (St John ii. 19, 21).

The numerous rooms for the use of the Levites and for the storage of offerings for the services, &c., which clustered around the Temple—“My Father’s

house" (St John ii. 16)—probably illustrated our Lord's reference to heaven—

"In My Father's house are many mansions" (St John xiv, 2).

The burning of the sacrifices by fire and the use of salt—the symbol of purity and preservation—with the sacrifices are the ground-work of our Lord's teaching that the offering up of self as a sacrifice to God involves not only suffering and trial, but needs also the purifying grace of the Holy Spirit to render it perfect and acceptable—

"For every one shall be salted with fire" ("and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," *margin*.) (St Mark ix. 49).

Two striking ceremonies which marked the joyous celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, viz., the pouring out over the altar of water brought from the pool of Siloam and the lighting of the lamps in the Temple courts, appear to have suggested our Lord's words spoken at the feast—

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (St John vii. 37).

"Again, therefore, Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world" (St John viii. 12).

CHAPTER IX.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE AND NATURAL PHENOMENA.

It has been already pointed out how largely our Lord drew upon Nature, its processes and its phenomena, in the course of His teaching. It should,

however, be noted that our Lord's great purpose was not to teach science, but to proclaim the "Gospel of the kingdom." And all His allusions to the order of creation belonged to "the externals of His doctrine," and were used simply as "means in aid of that teaching."^a The facts of Nature to which He referred lay upon the surface, and were within the knowledge of His hearers ; and He appeals to them to illustrate and enforce the truths and lessons which He taught. Our Lord's method is very suggestive to all teachers. He not only shows us what a wealth of illustration is contained in the book of Nature—which appeals powerfully to all, and not least to the young mind—but also reveals something of the Divine harmony which exists between the natural and spiritual worlds.

We shall deal now with illustrations drawn from the seasons of the year, the heavenly bodies, and the phenomena of Nature.

1. THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR. The climate of Palestine is "naturally divided, not into four seasons, as with us, but into two, summer and winter, which succeed each other with scarcely any intermediate gradations."^b No other country in the world of similar extent presents such a variety of climate as the Holy Land. Its maritime plains, its northern and central mountain ranges, and the deep trough of the Jordan Valley, combine within its narrow area the characteristics of temperate, cold, and tropical countries. This combination made the land peculiarly suitable as the "Land of the Book"

^a Wendt, "Teaching of Jesus," vol. i., p. 153.

^b Tristram, "Natural History of Palestine," p. 38.

—the Book which was to circulate in all parts of the world, and to be read by people of all climates. It would be easy to refer to passages which bear this impress of the physical and climatic features of Palestine, but we are concerned here only with our Lord's illustrations drawn from them.

In speaking of the signs which should precede His second coming, our Lord directed attention to the green foliage of the spring as the immediate harbinger of summer, and as presenting a sign which all could read—

“ Now from the fig-tree learn her parable : when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh ; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that He is nigh, even at the doors ” (St Matt. xxiv. 32, 33).

The winter—which in Jerusalem and the hill country is sometimes very severe, especially for the lightly clad peasantry^a—is referred to in our Lord's warnings of the terrors attending the destruction of Jerusalem—

“ Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter ” (St Matt. xxiv. 20).

2. THE HEAVENLY BODIES. The sun is a symbol both of our Lord Himself and of His people—

“ I am the Light of the world ” (St John viii. 12).

“ I am come a Light unto the world, that whosoever

^a Towards the end of January, 1898, when the writer was in Palestine, he found that in the previous week five inches of snow fell in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and a fortnight later seven inches. There were several deaths from exposure to the inclemency of the weather.

believeth on Me may not abide in the darkness" (St John xii. 46).

"Ye are the light of the world" (St Matt. v. 14).

The sunshine (as well as rain), as God's gift to the evil as well as good, is illustrative of the character and of the sphere of the Christian's love for and service to his fellows—

"That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (St Matt. v. 45).

In the East all journeying was by daylight ; there was danger of stumbling in the darkness of the night. This illustrates the truth that we are safe only when pursuing the path of duty, illumined by the light of heaven and the presence of Him Who is the Light of the world—

"If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him" (St John xi. 9, 10).

"Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not : and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light" (St John xii. 35, 36).

The future glory of the righteous is compared to the radiance of the sun—

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (St Matt. xiii. 43):

The scorching heat of the sun which withers the plant which has no depth of soil is like the influences which cause a shallow faith to fade away—

"When the sun was risen, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away. . . . When tribulation

or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth" (St Matt. xiii. 6, 21).

The darkening of the sun and moon, either by eclipse or by clouds, and the falling of stars from heaven, is a picture of the calamities and darkness of the great day of the Lord—

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (St Matt. xxiv. 29).

"There shall be signs in sun and moon and stars" (St Matt. xxiv. 25).

3. PHENOMENA OF NATURE. Light and darkness have been mentioned above; but we may add the illustration our Lord drew from them when speaking to Nicodemus (which must have been all the more forcible as he came to Him by night)—

"Men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd: But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God" (St John iii. 19-21).

Thunderstorms, Canon Tristram states, are not uncommon in winter, although unknown in summer, in the Holy Land. It was therefore to a fact within the knowledge of His hearers that He referred when He compared His advent to the sudden and far-extending lightning flash—

"As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (St Matt. xxiv. 27).

The power of the seventy over demons, reported by them on their return, is regarded by our Lord as an earnest of the dethronement of Satan, which He compares to a flash of lightning—

“ And He said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven ” (St Luke x. 18).

Earthquakes were not unknown in Palestine (see Zech. xiv. 5 ; St Matt. xxvii. 51), and our Lord included them in the events which should usher in the time of the end, and also possibly as illustrative of God’s judgments in general which should mark that time—

“ There shall be . . . earthquakes in divers places ” (St Matt. xxiv. 7).

The element of fire furnishes our Lord with several illustrations. (*a*) Of God’s dealings with men, as testing their characters, even as fire tests metals, burning up the dross—

“ I came to cast fire upon the earth ; and what will I, if it is already kindled ? ” (St Luke xii. 49).

(*b*) Of the punishment of the wicked, where the material element of fire is used to teach that “ there shall be for the soul of the evil-doer, when brought face to face with the holiness of God, which is a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 29), an anguish as intolerable as the touch of earthly flame is to the nerves of the mortal body ” ^{*a*}—

“ Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels ” (St Matt. xxv. 41).

“ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments . . . and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me

^{*a*} Plumptre, “ Ellicott’s Commentary on St Luke xvi. 29.”

and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (St Luke xvi. 23, 24).

(c) The imagery of another of our Lord's illustrations from fire appears to have been drawn from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where a constant fire consumed the putrid offal and refuse of the city, and so became a type of the place of final punishment—

"It is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell (Gehenna), into the unquenchable fire . . . where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (St Mark ix. 43-48).

Our Lord, "when He would seek analogies in the natural world for the mysterious movements, not to be traced by human eye, of the Holy Spirit," ^a refers to the wind, invisible, but working after its own sovereign mysterious laws and revealing its power by the effects which it produces—

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (St John iii. 8).

And when He would rebuke the people for their inability to read the "signs of the times," He contrasts with this their readiness to observe the signs of change of weather. The south, or sirocco wind which blows from the desert, always brings heat with it. This gave our Lord one illustration—

"When ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven;

^a Trench, "Synonyms of New Testament," p. 265.

but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time?" (St Luke xii. 55, 56).

And a second illustration of the same subject He found in the clouds—

"When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass" (St Luke xii. 54).

"When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times" (St Matt. xvi. 2, 3).

The gift of rain, like that of the sun, illustrates God's care for all His creatures, and furnishes an example to man—

"Your Father . . . sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (St Matt. v. 45).

When our Lord would describe the influences which test the character and life alike of him who builds on the solid rock and of him who erects his house on the sand, He finds an illustration in the destructive downpour of the "former" or winter rain, which fills the torrent beds and washes away the latter structure while the former stands the strain—

"The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. . . . The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (St Matt. vii. 25-27).

Although the western boundary of Palestine was the "Great" or Mediterranean Sea, the Jews had no seaport, except the indifferent one of Joppa.

They regarded the sea as a barrier which separated them from other countries ; and for the most part seem to have shrunk from it, as many Orientals do now, with dread and terror. Its restlessness and its destructive storms impressed them more than its grandeur and its beauty. When our Lord depicts the unrest and disquietude of the world before His return, He takes His hearers to the dreaded sea—

“ Upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows ” (St Luke xxi. 25).

CHAPTER X.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY.

IN describing the world-wide extent of His kingdom our Lord refers to the points of the compass as embracing all the nations of the earth among which His Gospel was to be preached, and from which converts should be gathered—

“ And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God ” (St Luke xiii. 29).

Palestine is a mountainous country, with Lebanon and Hermon in the north, a central ridge running through the land from north to south, and with the high tableland of Bashan and the mountains of Moab on the east. After His descent from the Transfiguration on Mount Hermon, perhaps pointing to it, He illustrates the power of faith in over-

coming apparently insurmountable difficulties by saying—

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (St Matt. xvii. 20).

Again, on the Mount of Olives, He repeats the hyperbolical expression—

“Even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (St Matt. xxi. 21, 22).

In the Sermon on the Mount, when our Lord desired to indicate the visibility of His Church, and the personal responsibility of each member of it, He finds an illustration in the city of Safed, visible from where He spoke—a mountain city 2650 feet above the sea, a conspicuous object in Galilee, and from which a grand panorama is visible—

“A city set on a hill cannot be hid” (St Matt. v. 14).

All towns in Palestine were walled, and the entrance was by the gates—a narrow gate for foot passengers, at the side of the larger gate for camels, &c., which, as every visitor to the Holy Land observes, traverse the narrow streets of the cities. In Syria the former, it has been said by one traveller, is now, and apparently was anciently, called “the needle’s eye,” and our Lord, referring to the impossibility of a camel entering by this smaller gateway, used it as a striking illustration of the hindrances which the love and pursuit of wealth present to one seeking to enter His kingdom—

“It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than

for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (St Matt. xix. 24).

A walk through the narrow streets of Jerusalem at night reveals not only their complete desertion, but their darkness, while every house has its light burning all night within. The streets are unlighted, and there being few windows opening on to the footway, no light from within shines on the roughly paved street. This lends peculiar force to our Lord's description of the condition of those who will be excluded from the house of heaven—

"The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St Matt. viii. 12).

"Cast him out into the outer darkness" (St Matt. xxii. 13).

"Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness" (St Matt. xxv. 30).

CHAPTER XI.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURAL HISTORY.

WE have already had sufficient proof of how much at home our Lord was in the world of Nature. But we have still further evidence of this in the references He made to, and the illustrations He drew from, the natural history of the land. "The years at Nazareth must have been diligently used in observation of the great book of Nature and of man, as well as of written revelation. The Gospels show throughout that nothing escaped the eye of Jesus.

The lilies and the grass of the field as He paints them in the Sermon on the Mount ; the hen as it gathers its young, in its mother's love, under its widespread wings ; the birds of the air as they eat and drink, without care, from the bounty around them ; the lambs which follow the shepherd, but sometimes go astray and are lost in the wilderness ; the dogs so familiar in Eastern cities ; the foxes that make their holes in the thickets ; the silent plants and flowers ; the humble life of the creatures of the wood, the air, the fold, and the street, were all alike noticed in these early years of preparation." ^a And upon this knowledge, derived from His own personal observation, He drew largely for metaphors and illustrations in the course of His ministry.

We proceed to classify these allusions to natural history :—

1. THE ANIMAL WORLD. The *camel*, the Eastern beast of burden, seen more frequently perhaps in Palestine and Egypt than any other animal, furnishes our Lord with two illustrations, both derived from its great size. One we noticed in the previous chapter ; the other was employed to illustrate the scrupulous zeal of the Pharisees in little things, while at the same time they neglected matters of importance—

“ Ye blind guides, which strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel ” (St Matt. xxiii. 24).

The *ass*—the beast most frequently ridden in the East in olden times as well as to-day, being in consequence of considerable value—is instanced by our

^a Geikie, “ Life of Christ,” vol. i., p. 240.

Lord (together with the ox) when He charged them with inconsistency in complaining of His works of mercy on the Sabbath—

“Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?” (St Luke xiii. 15).

“Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath day?” (St Luke xiv. 5).

The *ox* finds mention again in illustration of the excuses men make for refusing God's invitations—

“Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused” (St Luke xiv. 19).

The numerous allusions to *sheep* and one reference to *goats* have already been noted in the chapter on “Illustrations from Pastoral Life.”

The welcome afforded and the feast provided by God for returning wanderers is illustrated by the fatted *calf*—fattened and kept for some specially festive occasion—

“Bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry” (St Luke xv. 23).

“The *wolf* is now, as of old, the dread of the shepherds of Palestine. Not so numerous, but much more formidable than the jackal, he lurks about the folds, hunting not in noisy packs, but secreting himself till dark among the rocks. Without rousing the vigilance of the sheep-dogs, he leaps into the fold and seizes his victim by stealth.”^a This furnishes our Lord with a forcible illustration of the

^a Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p. 153.

dangers which would beset His people from treacherous, crafty, and cruel opponents—

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (St Matt. vii. 15).

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” (St Matt. x. 16; comp. St Luke x. 3).

“He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them” (St John x. 12).

The *fox* is mentioned twice by our Lord. Once when He contrasts His own homeless condition with that of the beasts and birds, referring to its “habit of burrowing, especially among rocks or ruins” ^a —

“The foxes have holes . . . but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head” (St Matt. viii. 20);

and again where He refers to its cunning and duplicity as illustrating the character of Herod Antipas—

“Go and say to that fox” (St Luke xiii. 32).

The *dog* was regarded with very different feelings to those with which we are familiar. “They were encouraged in towns and villages as common scavengers”—as may be seen to-day in Jerusalem—“clearing away carcases and offal that might otherwise create pestilence; but the individual instinct and fidelity of the dog was never cultivated, though allowed to enter the house and eat of the crumbs which fell from their master’s table.” ^b Jews called

^a Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p. 87.

^b *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Gentiles "dogs," as Mohammedans now scornfully designate Christians by that name. Our Lord, in His conversation with the Syro-Phœnician woman, used the term (but we may be sure without the contempt it usually expressed; for, indeed, He softened its apparent harshness by employing the diminutive, "little dogs," alluding thereby to house-dogs) to describe those who were outside Israel—

"It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs" (St Matt. xv. 26).

In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus the finishing touch to the picture of the misery and forlorn condition of the beggar is depicted by the statement—

"Yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores" (St Luke xvi. 21).

Swine were regarded as the most unclean of animals, and were forbidden to be eaten by the Jews. Our Lord couples them with dogs in a warning to His disciples not to expose sacred things to men of brutish and unholy passions—

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you" (St Matt. vii. 6).

The ferocity of the swine at finding only pearls when they expected food finds its parallel in the case of those who have no appetite for Divine things, which, indeed, only excite their opposition.

The degradation of the sinner who wanders from the plenty of the Father's house to the famine of the "far country" is represented in the parable—

"He went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And

he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him" (St Luke xv. 15, 16).

Passing on to *birds*, we find our Lord pointing to them generally as the objects of God's providential care, and as therefore teaching the lesson of trust in Him for the needs of this life—

"Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?" (St Matt. vi. 26).

They are instanced to illustrate the same contrast with Himself as that furnished by the fox—

"The birds of the heaven have nests" (St Matt. viii. 20).

The birds that pick up the seed which falls on the trodden pathway represent the Evil One, who is ever on the watch to expel good from the hearts of men—

"Some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. . . . Then cometh the Evil One, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart" (St Matt. xiii. 4, 19).

Once again, as they perch on the branches of the mustard tree, they represent those who find a place in the kingdom of God—

"The birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof" (St Matt. xiii. 32).

But particular birds are specified, and illustrations drawn from them by our Lord :—

The *sparrow*—"The name is evidently generic, not denoting the house-sparrow, or any other species specially, but applied to all the varieties of small pas-

serine birds"^a—is referred to to teach the lesson of dependence upon God—

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. . . . Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows" (St Matt. x. 29, 31).

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God" (St Luke xii. 6).

So comparatively valueless is the sparrow, that if two farthings' worth is purchased in the market one is thrown in; and yet God cares for it. How much more will He provide for man's needs!

The *dove*—more frequently mentioned in the Bible than any other bird—in the gentleness and innocence of its disposition, depicts the Christian character—

"Harmless as doves" (St Matt. x. 16).

The care of the *hen* for her brood of chickens illustrates our Lord's tender love for the people of Jerusalem—

"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (St Matt. xxiii. 37).

The *eagle*, in its keen scent for carrion and its swooping down on its prey, affords an illustration of the truth that "wherever a Church or nation is decaying and putrescent, there to the end of time will God's messengers of vengeance, the vultures that do their work of destruction . . . assuredly be found"^b

'Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together' (St Matt. xxiii. 28).

^a Tristram, "Natural History of Palestine," p. 201.

^b Plumptre, "Ellicott's Commentary on St Matthew."

The *raven* (which includes the whole family of the crow tribe) which has its home in desolate places and roams far in search of food (*Tristram*), is cited as another example of God's providential care—

“Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds!” (St Luke xii. 24).

Serpents and vipers, which “in Palestine are very numerous, the country being adapted for their residence,”^a are referred to by our Lord to illustrate opposite characters. Its wisdom and perhaps “its wariness in avoiding danger” were to be imitated by our Lord's disciples—

“Be ye therefore wise as serpents” (St Matt. x. 16).

Its cunning and malignant craftiness in seeking its prey were characteristic of the Pharisees, who “compassed sea and land to make one proselyte.” Our Lord repeated what St John the Baptist first uttered (St Matt. iii. 7) when He said—

“Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?” (St Matt. xii. 34).

“Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?” (St Matt. xxiii. 33).

To conceive of God giving evil things in answer to prayer was as unreasonable as to think of a father giving his son a deadly serpent when he asked for a fish—

“What man is there of you if his son shall ask him for . . . a fish, will he give him a serpent?” (St Matt. vii. 10).

The *scorpion* has a venomous sting; and in

^a Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p 269.

promising the seventy disciples, and afterwards the Apostles, preservation from danger, our Lord couples it with serpents as symbolic of physical and spiritual powers of evil—

“Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in anywise hurt you” (St Luke x. 19).

“They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them” (St Mark xvi. 18).

The *worm* is a symbol of the gnawing pain and anguish of remorse which will form so large a part of final punishment—

“Where their worm dieth not” (St Mark ix. 48).

To rebuke the folly of only laying up earthly treasure, which cannot last, our Lord alludes to “the destruction caused in clothing by the larvæ of the little clothes *moth* (*Tineidæ*), of which very many species are found in Palestine.”^a Much of the wealth of Orientals consisting of costly raiment explains the force of our Lord’s charge—

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume” (St Matt. vi. 19).

Our Lord’s allusion to the *gnat* (St Matt. xxiii. 24) has been already quoted.^b

2. THE VEGETABLE WORLD. Omitting all allusions which have been already noted in dealing with agricultural illustrations, we find the following allusions to trees and plants:—

The *sycamore tree*—the black mulberry—was once very plentiful in Palestine, and furnished our Lord with an illustration of the power of faith—

^a Tristram, “Natural History of Palestine,” p. 326.

^b Page 81.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would have obeyed you" (St Luke xvii. 6).

The *olive tree*—cultivated so largely in Syria for its oil—finds an incidental allusion in the parable—

"How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil" (St Luke xvi. 6).

The *fig tree*, "which puts forth its earliest fruit buds before its leaves,"^a represents the Jewish nation, and the tree without fruit, but bearing the promise of it in its leaves, depicts its barrenness in the fruits of righteousness—

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?" (St Luke xiii. 6, 7).

"And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only; and He saith unto it, Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away" (St Matt. xxi. 19).

The *mustard*, as "the largest plant which comes from the smallest seed," growing in the Jordan Valley to a height of at least seven or eight feet,^b is a picture of the possibilities of faith—

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," &c. (St Matt. xvii. 20),

and also of the rapid progress of the Christian Church—

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed

^a Tristram, "Natural History of Palestine," p. 351.

^b Bardsley, "Illustrative Texts," p. 189.

is less than all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof " (St Matt. xiii. 31, 32).

Mint (eaten with food), *anise* and *cummin* (the seeds of both used medicinally and for flavouring food), and *rue* (employed as a disinfectant), of which the Pharisees punctiliously paid tithe, are cited by our Lord to rebuke their scrupulous care for the infinitesimal, while they neglected the great duties of religion—

" Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin " ["mint and rue and every herb," St Luke xi. 42], "and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith " (St Matt. xxiii. 23).

The lily of the field (the scarlet anemone, which even early in February, as the writer witnessed, carpets the plain of Sharon) and *grass* generally are instanced by our Lord to rebuke anxiety about the concerns of this life—

" Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they toil not, neither do they spin : yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? " (St Matt. vi. 28-30).

Thorns, thistles, and brambles, prickly shrubs which grow so naturally and luxuriantly on the rocks of Palestine, are referred to in the following passage—

" By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? " (St Matt. vii. 16).

" Each tree is known by its own fruit : For of thorns men

do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes " (St Luke vi. 44).

"The thorns grew up and choked them. . . . The care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (St Matt. xiii. 7, 22).

The *reed*, "a very tall cane, growing twelve feet high, with a magnificent panicle of blossom at the top, and so slender and yielding that it will lie perfectly flat under a gust of wind, and immediately resume its upright position,"^a which grows on the banks of the Jordan and Dead Sea, is referred to as a figure of a yielding and oscillating character to correct any false notion which the people may have had of St John the Baptist—

"What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken with the wind?" (St Matt. xi. 7).

CHAPTER XII.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE HUMAN BODY, AND ITS SENSATIONS, DISEASES, &C.

OUR Lord in the course of His teaching made many allusions to human nature, body as well as soul, which He came to redeem. But our consideration of these references is limited here to those which He made by way of illustrating some important moral or spiritual truth. If we regard His miracles over the many "ills that flesh is heir to" as "parables in action," as "signs" not only of His

^a Tristram, "Natural History of Palestine," p. 437.

divine power, but as visible representations of the evils wrought by sin and of our Lord's dominion over every form of evil, we shall see that man's body was not excluded from our Lord's field of illustration.

1. **THE HUMAN BODY.** The expression "flesh and blood," the common Hebrew term for man's physical nature, was employed by our Lord to denote human agency—

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee" (St Matt. xvi. 17).

The phrase is also used by Him to describe the completeness of the atonement offered by Him for man, and the mystery of the means by which the spiritual life is sustained—

"The bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (St John vi. 51).

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life" (St John vi. 53, 54).

Some of the organs of the body are alluded to.

The *eye* is the symbol of the conscience by which, if it discerns truly, man is rightly guided, but which, if it be diseased or its vision be oblique, will dim or darken his moral sensibilities—

"The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (St Matt. vi. 22, 23).

The eye, in its envious and malignant glances, becomes an "evil eye" (St Mark vii. 22), and in popular estimation such a glance has been thought

to carry with it a magical power to injure.^a Without lending any countenance to this superstitious belief, our Lord uses it as an illustration of envy—

“Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (St Matt. xx. 15).

“From within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed . . . an evil eye” (St Mark vii. 21, 22).

The eye and the ear, as the channels of sight and sound, are symbols of spiritual perception—

“Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear” (St Matt. xiii. 16).

With this may be coupled the phrase several times used by our Lord to illustrate the need of spiritual enlightenment—

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (St Matt. xi. 15, xiii. 9, 43).

The eye, as one of the channels through which evil enters the soul, coupled with the hand and foot as the instruments by which evil is wrought, was figuratively employed by our Lord to denote all occasions of sin and all that hinders salvation, whether our own or others—

“If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee. . . . And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body go into hell” (St Matt. v. 29, 30; comp. St Mark ix. 43-47).

“If thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble,” &c. (St Matt. xviii. 8, 9).

To warn against ostentation in almsgiving our

^a Plumptre, “Ellicott’s New Testament Commentary,” St Matt. xx. 15.

Lord uses a proverbial expression, which enforced the lesson of secrecy—

“When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine alms may be in secret ” (St Matt. vi. 3, 4).

To teach the lesson of meekness under injuries—the patient acceptance of wrong without retaliation—our Lord gives as an illustration the scornful insult of smiting on the cheek, which is to be met without self-revenge—

“Resist not him that is evil ; but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also ” (St Matt. v. 39).

As specimens of foolish and inconsiderate swearing, and to show how profane such conduct was, our Lord said—

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black ” (St Matt. v. 36).

And to indicate that what men may regard as the trivial incidents of life are not too insignificant for God's providential care He refers to the human hair—

“The very hairs of your head are all numbered ” (St Matt. x. 30).

2. BODILY SENSATIONS. Hunger and thirst—two of the keenest sensations which man can experience—are illustrative of the heart-cravings of those who are seeking after God and true happiness—

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled ” (St Matt. v. 6).

“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink ” (St John vii. 37).

And the satisfying character of eternal life is set forth in the words—

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst” (St John iv. 14);

whereas the experience in the life to come of those who are satisfied now with what the world has to offer is represented by the pangs of hunger, thirst, and weeping—

“Woe unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep” (St Luke vi. 25).

Mourning and weeping, it may be added in this connexion, are represented by the striking figure of the “gnashing of teeth”—expressing “that intensest form of human anguish in which it ceases to be articulate,”^a which will be the experience of those excluded from the kingdom of heaven—

“There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth” (St Matt. viii. 12, xiii. 42, 50, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51, xxv. 30).

Sleep is used as an illustration of apathy and neglect, especially in reference to the second coming of our Lord—

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (St Matt. xxv. 5);

and also of the state of the departed, as indicating not only the rest of the soul after the working day of life’s labour is over, but also the fact of the awakening which will follow—

“The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth” (St Matt. ix. 24).

“Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. The disciples therefore said unto

^a Plumptre, “Ellicott’s New Testament Commentary,”
St Matt. viii. 12.

Him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death ; but they thought that He spake of taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead " (St John xi. 11-14).

3. **BODILY SICKNESSES, &c.** In connection with our Lord's miraculous power over the "ills that flesh is heir to," it may be well to quote Archbishop Trench : "What evils are they which hinder man from realising the true end and aim of his creation, and from which he needs a redemption? It may be briefly answered that they are sin in its moral and in its physical manifestations. If we regard its moral manifestations in the darkness of the understanding, in the wild discords of the physical life, none were such fearful examples as the demoniacs ; they were special objects, therefore, of the miraculous power of the Lord. Then if we ask ourselves what are the physical manifestations of sin : they are sicknesses of all kinds, fevers, palsies, leprosies, blindness, each of these death beginning, a partial death—and finally, the death absolute of the body. This region, therefore, is fitly another, as it is the widest region of His redemptive grace. In the conquering and removing of these evils He eminently bodied forth the idea of Himself as the Redeemer of men." ^a

Every disease over which our Lord exercised His healing power may therefore be regarded as an illustration of some particular aspect of sin, and as showing how He is able to meet every spiritual need of man. We need only specify these different aspects and the miracles which illustrated them—

(1) The terrible power of the Evil One is illustrated by the

^a Trench, "Miracles," p. 34.

cases of demoniacal possession—at Capernaum (St Mark i. 21-28), at Gadara (St Matt. viii. 28-34), the dumb demoniac (St Matt. ix. 32-34), Syro-phœnician woman's daughter (St Matt. xv. 21-28), the demoniac boy (St Matt. xvii. 14-21), the blind and dumb demoniac (St Matt. xii. 22-37).

(2) The loathsomeness of sin—by leprosy (St Matt. viii. 2-4; St Luke xvii. 12-19).

(3) The impotence and weakness caused by sin—the centurion's servant (St Matt. viii. 1-13), impotent man at Bethesda (St John v. 2-15), the paralytic (St Matt. ix. 1-8), the man with the withered hand (St Matt. xii. 9-21).

(4) The malignancy and anguish of sin—healing of Simon's wife's mother of fever (St Matt. viii. 14-17).

(5) The spiritually deaf and dumb (St Mark vii. 31-37).

(6) The blindness caused by sin—healing the blind at Bethesda (St Mark viii. 22-26), man born blind (St John ix. 1-13), two blind men in the houses (St Matt. ix. 27), Bartimæus and another (St Matt. xx. 29-34).

(7) The death of sin—Jairus' daughter (St Matt. ix. 23-26), widow's son (St Luke vii. 11-17), and Lazarus (St John xi. 30-45).

Blindness is employed as a symbol of false, misguided teachers—

“Let them alone : they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (St Matt. xv. 14).

In answer to the Pharisees' question why our Lord ate with publicans and sinners, He drew an illustration from the physician—

“They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick” (St Matt. ix. 12).

Physical death is a symbol of spiritual death, and He Who will hereafter raise those who are in the former condition can quicken those in the latter—

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live” (St John v. 25).

The disciple who wished to postpone following Christ until after his father's death is rebuked by our Lord in the figurative words—

“Follow Me; and leave the dead [the spiritually dead] to bury their own dead” (St Matt. viii. 22).

The sepulchre, which once a year was white-washed, in order to warn passers-by, lest by touching it they should contract ceremonial uncleanness, was a picture of the Pharisees in their external morality—

“Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outward appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness” (St Matt. xxiii. 27).

CHAPTER XIII.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL EXPRESSIONS.

PROVERBS are the most universal and probably the most ancient kind of writing with which we are familiar. There is hardly a nation to be found which has not its own collection. A proverb, which has been defined as “the wit of one man and the wisdom of many,” sets forth, in a pithy, antithetical form, some truth—or what has come to be regarded as a truth—based on general experience.

The Jews were no exceptions to this general use of proverbs,^a and our Lord would naturally become

^a See Ezek. xviii. 2. For a list of some of the proverbs current in our Lord's day see Geikie, “Life of Christ,” vol. i., pp. 181-183.

acquainted with those in use among them in His days. Some of these He not infrequently quoted to illustrate a truth or to enforce a lesson, and so gave point to his teaching. We may therefore include them in the catalogue of our Lord's illustrations. It will be sufficient, however, for our purpose simply to recall what appear to have been proverbs, or at least proverbial expressions, without further comment, as the phrases themselves, or the context in which they occur, sufficiently explain their meaning. They will often be found to throw light on the thoughts and life of the people.

The following have been regarded as proverbs or current phrases in use in our Lord's day :—

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (St Matt. vi. 3).

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you" ^a (St Matt. vii. 2).

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (St Matt. vii. 3).

"Leave the dead to bury their own dead" (St Matt. viii. 22).

"They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (St Matt. ix. 12).

"No man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment . . . neither do men put new wine into old skins" (St Matt. ix. 16, 17).

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" ^b (St Matt. xi. 15, xiii. 9, &c.).

"He that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (St Matt. xii. 30).

^a Geikie, "Life of Christ," vol. i., pp. 181-183.

^b Geikie, *ibid.*

"If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (St Matt. xv. 14).

"It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye" &c. (St Matt. xix. 24).

"Strain out the gnat and swallow the camel" (St Matt. xxiii. 24).

"Wheresóever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (St Matt. xxiv. 28).

"He that is not against us is for us" (St Mark ix. 40).

"Physician, heal thyself" (St Luke iv. 23).

"No prophet is acceptable in his own country" (St Luke iv. 24; St Matt. xiii. 57; St John iv. 44).

"The old is good" (*marg.*, better) (St Luke v. 39).

"The labourer is worthy of his hire" (St Luke x. 7).

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" ^a (St Luke xviii. 14).

"One soweth, and another reapeth" (St John iv. 37).

CHAPTER XIV.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

THIS survey of our Lord's illustrations would be incomplete if we omitted those which He drew from the Holy Scriptures. While it is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss the all-important questions connected with our Lord's references to the Old Testament which have recently engaged the attention of critics, yet the subject can hardly be passed over without a few observations on one of the issues which have been raised.

^a Geikie, "Life of Christ," vol. i., pp. 181-183.

Bishop Ellicott calls attention to "the plain fact that our blessed Lord either cites or refers to passages in the Old Testament Scriptures probably more than four hundred times. . . . In many of these He speaks of the Old Testament in a direct and definite manner."^a He draws from this the conclusion that where our Lord has "asserted a certain character for a certain writing" we may confidently appeal to Him "in reference to the nature and authority of the Old Testament."

It has been asserted that our Lord, in referring to events narrated in the Old Testament, did so without necessarily affirming their historical accuracy. But, in reply to this, Bishop Ellicott proceeds "to show, from selected examples, that it is certain that He regarded the events as real, and that thus far He may be considered to set his seal to the truth of Old Testament history."^b The examples which he selects are our Lord's references to Abel, the Flood, the destruction of the cities of the plain and the fate of Lot's wife, the manifestation of God at the burning bush, the gift of manna, the brazen serpent, the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and the work and deliverance of Jonah. The conclusion to which his examination of these references to history leads him is that "the historical references were to real events, and to acknowledged facts in history,"^c and he points out that these "events and facts seem quickened with a new life when He alludes to them."

With this conclusion of an eminent Biblical scholar we may rest content.

^a Bishop Ellicott, "Christus Comprobator ; or, The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament," p. 91. ^b *Ibid.*, p. 156. ^c *Ibid.*, p. 177.

We now proceed to cite the references to Old Testament history which our Lord made from time to time during His ministry to illustrate and enforce His teaching.

The sanctity of marriage is illustrated by a reference to the fact that God created "our first parents, Adam and Eve, and did sanctify and join them together in marriage"—

"Have ye not read, that He which made them from the beginning made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh?" (St Matt. xix. 4, 5).

The retributive judgment of God is enforced by an allusion to the deaths of Abel and Zachariah—the one in the first book, and the latter in the last book in the order of the Hebrew Scriptures—

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah, son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar" (St Matt. xxiii. 35).

The final Judgment finds its parallel in the catastrophe of the Flood—

"And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days which were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (St Matt. xxiv. 37-39).

The destruction of the cities of the plain is also a foreshadowing of the events of the last day—

"Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they

builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (St Luke xvii. 28-30).

The dangers of the love of the present world, and of a lingering reluctance to part from it, are illustrated by the fate of Lot's wife; "a standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul" (Wisdom x. 7)—

"Remember Lot's wife" (St Luke xvii. 32).

The greater responsibility attending the greater light and knowledge of those who had heard the Gospel finds another illustration in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah—

"Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for that city" (St Matt. x. 15).

"It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment than for thee" (St Matt. xi. 24).

Our Lord's pre-existence is affirmed in His allusions to the patriarch Abraham—

"Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (St John viii. 56).

"Before Abraham was, I am" (St John viii. 58).

The doctrine of the resurrection and "the imperishability of all that ever entered into vital and real relationship with God"^a are deduced by our Lord from the words of God uttered at the Burning Bush—

"As touching the dead, that they are raised: have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the

^a Chadwick on St Mark xii.

God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (St Mark xii. 26, 27).

When our Lord, having fed the 5000 in the wilderness, bases on that miracle His "deep teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum of Himself as the living Bread, the Bread of which he that eateth will live for ever,"^a He finds a parallel and a contrast in the miraculous gift of manna—

"It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven" (St John vi. 32).

"I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which came down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (St John vi. 48-50).

The crucifixion of our Lord, the means by which it brings life to the sin-stricken, and the blessed result which follows, find a vivid foreshadowing in the uplifting of the brazen serpent in the wilderness—

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (St John iii. 14).

Passing on to the time of the Jewish Kingdom, we find our Lord illustrating the right interpretation of the Fourth Commandment as against the narrow, rigid literalism of the Pharisees, and also the principle that "mercy is better than sacrifice," by a reference to the life of David—

"Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the House of God, and did eat the shewbread, which it was

^a Ellicott, "Christus Comprobator," p. 161.

not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?" (St Matt. xii. 3, 4).

An incident in the building of the Temple, recorded in the Psalms, furnishes our Lord with a telling illustration of the conduct of the spiritual builders of His days against Himself, and of His ultimate triumph through the very means devised by them to destroy Him—

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner: this was from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (St Matt. xxi. 42).

The responsibility arising from the unbelief of the Jews is forcibly illustrated in the contrast exhibited by the Queen of Sheba—

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (St Matt. xii. 42).

The same truth is also taught by Jonah's mission to Nineveh, where the prophet is the sign and type of our Lord—

"The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (St Matt. xii. 41).

In response to the demands of the Pharisees, on two distinct occasions, for a "sign" from our Lord, He gives them "the sign of Jonah" as typical of His coming resurrection—typical alike in the fact of the time, the place, and the deliverance mentioned.

"There shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the

prophet ; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (*marg.*, sea-monster) ; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth " (St Matt. xii. 39, 40).

" An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah " (St Matt. xvi. 4).

In enforcing the truth of God's providential care for man's needs and the lesson of trust in Him, our Lord contrasts the simple beauty of the flowers of the field, which God clothes, with the gorgeous royal robes of Israel's most glorious king—

" I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these " (St Matt. vi. 29).

In the synagogue of Nazareth, where He must often have worshipped as Boy and Man, our Lord preached His first sermon in Galilee, in which He asserted that He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which He had read as, perhaps, the appointed lesson for the day. But His fellow-townsmen were startled by His claim of Messiahship ; and both as illustrating the proverb, " No prophet is acceptable in his own country," and also as furnishing an indication even in the Old Testament of the calling of the Gentiles, He refers to two miracles in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and thereby sets the seal of His authority to the Scriptural story—

" Of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land ; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in

the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian" (St Luke iv. 25-27).

These references to events recorded in the Old Testament, together with His numerous quotations from at least twelve of its books, show how familiar our Lord was with the Holy Scriptures. "It was from the clear fountain of the ancient oracles His childhood drank in the wisdom that cometh from above. They had been his only school-book, and they were the unwearying joy of His whole life." ^a So familiar was our Lord with the Bible, that He had a quotation or allusion ready in every emergency—in temptation, when He wields the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"; in teaching His disciples and in preaching to the people, when He "bringeth forth out of His treasure things new and old"; in exposing false teachers, when He refers their teaching to the standard of truth, of which He shows them they were really ignorant; in meeting the wiles and assaults of His foes, when He puts them to flight by His apt quotations; and in the hour of death, when they were the consolation of His heart. He who bid men "search the Scriptures" had Himself searched them. His precept, enforced by His example, should lead us to be "mighty in the Scriptures," that we too may find them an ever-ready source of strength, guidance, and comfort.

^a Geikie, "Life of Christ," vol. i., p. 239.

CHAPTER XV.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

OUR Lord was no unobservant spectator of what happened in the political world or in the course of daily life ; and His allusions, even though they were mostly veiled in general language, most have been within the personal knowledge of His hearers, and could not fail to give interest and point to His teaching.

Among these the following may be specified :—

I. THE INVESTITURE OF HEROD ARCHELAUS. Herod the Great by his will left Judæa, Idumæa, and Samaria to his son Archelaus ; but, as the appointment had to be confirmed by the Roman emperor, the latter set out for Rome “to receive his kingdom.” He was, however, followed by a deputation of fifty leading Jews to protest against it, and to ask for the incorporation of Judæa with Syria as a Roman province. Archelaus, however, received his investiture as ethnarch, with the promise of being made king after a time. On his return to Jerusalem he deposed the high priest, and Josephus states that he “used not the Jews only, but the Samaritans also, barbarously.” These events occurred in the early years of our Lord’s life ; but they were still fresh in men’s minds when, on our Lord passing through Jericho, where Herod had a palace—perhaps suggested by its proximity—He uttered the parable—

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for

himself a kingdom, and to return . . . But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not have this man reign over us. And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him . . . Howbeit, these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (St Luke xix. 12-27).

2. THE LUXURY OF THE COURT OF HEROD ANTIPAS. The Herodian Family was noted for its ostentatious display, its luxurious mode of life, its effeminate self-indulgence, and its "magnificent banquets and splendid anniversaries,"^a which did not escape our Lord's observation. After the messengers whom John the Baptist had sent to our Lord from his prison at Machærus—a palace, which was also a prison, of Herod Antipas, situated in a rocky defile on the east bank of the Dead Sea—had departed, our Lord bore testimony to the character and life of the Baptist, and contrasted the self-denying, ascetic life which he lived with these luxurious habits of the court of the Tetrarch of Galilee—

"But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses" (St Matt. xi. 8).

"They which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts" (St Luke vii. 25).

3. THE WAR BETWEEN HEROD THE TETRARCH AND ARETAS. Herod the Tetrarch's first wife was a daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king at Petra. On his divorcing her Aretas declared war against Herod. The latter sent his troops against him (it was these soldiers, probably, when

^a Farrar, "Life of Christ," vol. i., p. 389.

on their way down the Jordan valley to meet Aretas, who came in contact with John the Baptist and listened to his preaching, as recorded in St Luke iii. 14); but they were completely defeated. This event seems to be alluded to by our Lord when He was enforcing the need of "counting the cost" of becoming His followers—

"What king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel, whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him that cometh against him with 20,000," etc. (St Luke xiv. 31, 32).

4. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE GALILEANS.
The procuratorship of Pontius Pilate was marked by many outrages on the national and religious feelings of the Jews, such as his bringing the Roman eagles into the Holy City, and by hanging up gilt shields, inscribed with the names of heathen deities, in his palace at Jerusalem. It was probably some outbreak of religious frenzy, provoked by his cruelties, and repressed by his soldiers, which our Lord referred to when He sought to teach the lesson that temporal calamities were not always signs of special guilt—

"Now there were some present at that very season which told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered and said unto them, Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (St Luke xiii. 1, 2).

5. THE FALL OF THE TOWER IN SILOAM.
Pilate built an aqueduct to bring water into the city, but he exasperated the Jews by seizing the sacred treasure of the Temple for its construction.

Probably, as the Pool of Siloam was connected with the water system of the city, "the tower in question was part of the works which Pilate had planned and partly executed . . . and, if so, the popular excitement which this measure caused might well lead men to look on its fall as an instance of a Divine judgment on what they regarded as an act of sacrilege ^a—which our Lord also condemned when He said—

"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (St Luke xiii. 4, 5).

It is quite possible that there may be a further allusion to this work in our Lord's teaching about counting the cost of a Christian profession. "Pilate had begun to build, certainly an aqueduct, probably a tower, and had not been able to finish. He had not 'counted the cost,' and when he was hindered from laying hands on the Corban, or treasure of the Temple, his resources failed" ^b—

"Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest, haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (St Luke xiv. 28, 29).

6. **ROBBERS ON THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO.** The road from Jerusalem to Jericho—descending no less than 3000 feet in its entire length of twenty-one miles—has always been

^a Plumptre on St Luke xiii. 4, Ellicott's "Commentary."

^b Plumptre, *in loc.*

noted for its deeds of blood, which have led to its being called the "red" or "bloody" way. "Up from the valley of the Jordan below, or from the caves in the overhanging mountains around him, issue the Bedouin robbers, who from a very early date gave this road a proverbial celebrity for its deeds of blood, and who now make it impossible for even the vast host of pilgrims to descend to the Jordan without a Turkish guard." ^a Josephus (*Antiq.* xx. 5, 6; *Wars*, iv. 8, 21) relates several conflicts which took place on this road. It was probably an actual recent occurrence, known both to our Lord and to His hearers, to which He alluded in the Parable of the Good Samaritan—

"A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (St Luke x. 30).

CHAPTER XVI.

MISCELLANEOUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. **CLOTHING.** The patchwork garment has been already mentioned.^b

The purple garment, dyed with the costly dyes of Tyre, and the fine linen of Egypt, illustrates the luxurious, self-indulgent lives of such as the rich man and the Herodians—

"There was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen" (St Luke xvi. 19).

^a Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," p. 424.

^b See p. 54.

“What went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in kings’ houses” (St Matt. xi. 8).

“We know that it was and is part of the magnificence of Oriental potentates and princes to have vast stores of costly dresses laid up, a large portion of their wealth being often invested in these.”^a The Parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son appears to be founded on this custom, and our Lord illustrates the character of those who trust in a righteousness of their own, instead of that which is provided in “the Lord our righteousness” by the guest who came to the feast in his own clothing—

“When the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless” (St Matt. xxii. 11, 12).

The “best robe” given to the prodigal son illustrates the righteousness with which the repentant sinner is clothed; the ring, the seal of his new betrothal to God and of the gift of the Holy Spirit; the sandals, the “preparation of the Gospel of peace”—

“Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet” (St Luke xv. 22).

The warning against laying up treasures on earth acquires additional force when we recall what has been mentioned above about Oriental dresses—

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where *moth* and rust doth consume” (St Matt. vi. 19).

^a Trench, “Parables,” p. 234.

Eastern women to-day, as in our Lord's time, wear frontlets with coins attached to them, which were often given by the bridegroom at the time of marriage ; and the loss of one of these coins explains the woman's eagerness for its recovery. This is employed by our Lord to illustrate His seeking for the lost—

“What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?” (St Luke xv. 8).

2. DIVISIONS OF TIME. The twelve hours into which the Jews divided the day, reckoning from sunrise to sunset (the length of the hours being longer in summer than in winter, those of the night being correspondingly shorter or longer), illustrate the truth that each human life has its “twelve hours” of longer or shorter length, and that night cannot come until these hours have run their appointed course—

“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world” (St John xi. 9).

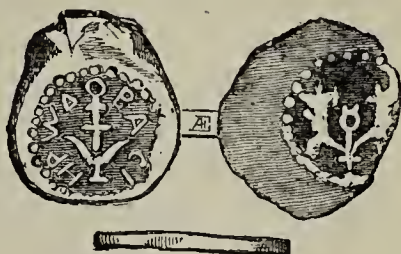
The night was divided into watches. The first, the evening watch, from 6 to 9 p.m. ; the second, midnight, from 9 to 12 ; the third, cock-crow, 12 to 3 a.m. ; and the morning watch, from 3 to 6 a.m. The uncertainty of our Lord's return is illustrated by references to these watches—

“If the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched” (St Matt. xxiv. 43).

“Watch therefore ; for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning” (St Mark xiii. 35).

3. MEASURES AND MONEY. The "bushel measure," holding about an English peck, becomes, as a business utensil, an illustration of the way in which the cares of business life hinder the spiritual activities, when it is used to cover over the lamp—

"Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house" (St Matt. v. 15).



A Farthing



Shekel of Israel

(*marg. age*)" (St Matt. vi. 27).

The Roman measure of a mile (just short of an English mile) is mentioned in our Lord's illustration of the spirit that yields more than is demanded rather than wrangle about it—

"Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain" (St Matt. v. 41).

To check anxiety about the things of this life, our Lord refers to the cubit—

"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature



Roman Denarius

The money of our Lord's day is several times referred to in the Gospels, although not always by way of illustration. Of these may be mentioned the mite, the smallest coin in circulation (St Mark xii. 42); the farthing—the assarion (St Matt. x. 29); the kodrantes (St Matt. v. 26); the shekel, a Jewish coin, probably the silver paid to Judas (St Matt. xxvi. 15); and the stater, a Greek coin (St Matt. xvii. 27). The Roman denarius^a—the daily wage of a labourer—is employed in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard to teach that God does not leave those who labour for Him unrewarded—

“When he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. . . . They received every man a penny” (St Matt. xx. 2, 9).

The denarius was also the coin demanded by our Lord to enforce the lesson of rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's—

“Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny” (St Matt. xxii. 19).

The difference between man's offences against God and those committed against his fellow-man is illustrated by the 10,000 talents (equal to £2,000,000) owing to the king, and the 100 pence (equal to £3 2s. 6d.) owing by his fellow-servant in the parable—

“One was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. . . . But that servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence” (St Matt. xviii. 24, 28).

The coin lost by the woman, viz., the drachma, is

^a See p. 39.

employed as a symbol of the soul originally stamped with God's image—

“What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece,” &c. (St Luke xv. 8).

The talents and pounds of the parables were not coins, but sums of money, and represent the gifts and capacities bestowed on men by God, for the use of which they will have to render an account—

“Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability” (St Matt. xxv. 15).

“He called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come” (St Luke xix. 13).

4. HIDDEN TREASURE. In the East treasures were often buried in times of war and political unrest, and forgotten. The eagerness of a man who comes unexpectedly upon such a “find,” and makes sacrifices in order to become possessor of it, is employed by our Lord to describe the case of “a man who, not having started in the pursuit of holiness or truth, is brought by the seeming accidents of life—a chance meeting, a word spoken in season, the example of a living holiness—to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, *i.e.* to Christ Himself, and who is ready to sacrifice the lower wealth in order to obtain the higher.”^α

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (St Matt. xiii. 44).

^α Plumptre, “Ellicott's New Testament Commentary,” *in loc.*

INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

ABEL, 114.
 Abraham, 115.
 Agricultural Life, 29, 37.
 Almsgiving, 77.
 Animal World, 93.
 Anise, 81, 102.
 Aretas, 121.
 Ass, 93.

 BATHING, 26.
 Bed, 16, 24.
 Birds, 45, 97.
 Birth, 23.
 Blindness, 109.
 Body, Human, 103.
 Branible, 102.
 Brazen Serpent, 116.
 Bread, 21.
 Bread of Life, 22.
 Bride and Bridegroom, 66.
 Builder, 54.
 Bush, Burning, 115.
 Bushel Measure, 16, 127.
 Business Dealings, 56.

 CALF, Fatted, 94.
 Camel, 91, 93.
 Cheek, Smiting on the, 106.
 Children, 23.
 " Games of, 24.
 Civil and National Life, 59.
 Climate of Palestine, 83.
 Clothing, 124.
 Clouds, 89.
 Coins, 13, 39, 63, 127.
 Corban, 77.
 Corn, Measuring, 57, 78.
 Corn, 37.
 Couches, 16.
 Cubit, 127.
 Cummin, 81, 102.
 Customs, Social, 64.
 " Marriage, 65, 124.

 DARKNESS, 86.
 Darnel, 43.

David, 117.
 Death, 107, 109.
 Debt, 58.
 Denarius, 39, 63, 127.
 Diseases, 108.
 Dog, 95.
 Door, 14, 30.
 Domestic Life, 12.
 Dove, 98.
 Draw-net, 52.
 Drinking, Eating and, 22.
 Dust, Shaking off, 72.

 EAGLE, 98.
 Ear, 105.
 Earthquakes, 87.
 Eating and Drinking, 22, 71
 Elijah and Elisha, 118.
 Evil Eye, 104.
 Eye, 104.

 FAITH, 91.
 Family Discords, 25.
 Family Life, 23.
 Farthing, 128.
 Fasting, 78.
 Feasts, 69, 82.
 " Wedding, 66.
 Feet, Washing the, 26, 70
 Field, 40.
 Fig Tree, 101.
 Fire, 87.
 Fish, 52.
 Fisherman, 51.
 Flesh and Blood, 104.
 Flocks, 34.
 Flood, The, 114.
 Food, 20.
 Fox, 95.
 Frontlets, 126.
 Fuller, 54.
 Furniture, 16.

 GALILEANS, Slaughter of, 122.
 Games of Children, 24.
 Garments, 70, 100, 121.

Gate of House, 14.
 Gate of City, 91.
 Gate, Strait and Wide, 14.
 Geography of Palestine, 90.
 Gnats, 81, 100.
 Goad, 40.
 Goats, 34.
 Grass, 102.
 Grinding, 18.
 Growth of Seed, 43.
 Guests, 17, 70.

HAIR, 106.
 Hand, 105.
 Hands, Washing the, 27.
 Harvest, 43.
 Heavenly Bodies, 84.
 Hen and Chickens, 98.
 Head, Swearing by the, 106.
 Herbs, 81, 102.
 Herod Archelaus, 120.
 „ Antipas, 121.
 Hidden Treasure, 129.
 Hinnom, Valley of, 88.
 History, Contemporary, 120.
 Home, 25.
 Hospitality, 67.
 Hours of the day, 126.
 Household Service, 25.
 Houses, 12, 89.
 Housetops, 14.
 Human Body, 103.
 Humility, 18, 26.
 Hunger, 106.
 Husbandman, 38.
 Hypocrisy, 21, 74, 80.

IMPORTUNITY in Prayer, 76.
 Inner Chamber, 14, 74.

JONAH, 117.
 Journeying, 71, 85.
 Judge, Unjust, 61, 76.
 Judgment, 114.
 „ Final, 60, 62, 114.
 Justice, 59.

KEY, 15.
 Knocking, 15.

LABOURERS, 38.
 Lamp, 16, 17, 127.
 Law, 61.
 Leaven, 21.
 Light of World, 82, 84.

Lightning, 86.
 Lily, 102.
 Lock, 15.
 Lot's Wife, 115.
 Luxury, 121.

MANNA, 116.
 Marriage, 65, 114.
 „ Customs, 65, 125.
 Measures, 16, 57, 127.
 Mile, 127.
 Mill, 20.
 Mint, 81, 102.
 Mite, 78.
 Money, 127.
 Moon, 86.
 Moth, 100.
 Mourning, 107.
 Mustard, 97, 101.

NATURAL Phenomena, 28, 82, 86.
 „ History, 92.
 Nature, 82.
 Needle's Eye, 91.
 Nets, 51.
 Night, Watches of the, 126.

OLD TESTAMENT, Illustrations
 from, 112.
 Olive, 101.
 Oven, 21.
 Ox, 94.

PALESTINE, 29, 35, 37, 47, 89, 90.
 „ Climate of, 83.
 „ Geography and Top-
 ography of, 90.

Pastoral Life, 28.
 Patchwork Garment, 54.
 Pearl Merchant, 55.
 Pearls, 96.
 Penny, 39, 63, 127.
 Phylacteries, 74.
 Physician, 109.
 Plain, Cities of the, 114.
 Plough, 40.
 Pound, 129.
 Prayer, 73.
 Proverbs, 110.
 Pruning, 49.
 Publicans, 63.
 Punishment, 61, 87.

RAIN, 85, 89.

- Raven, 99.
 Reapers, 43.
 Reed, 103.
 Relationship, Human, 23.
 Religious Life and Ceremonies,
 73, 81.
 Resurrection, 115.
 Retributive Judgment, 114.
 Robbers, 30, 59, 123.
 Robes, 70, 100, 125.
 Roman Taxation, 62.
 Roofs of Houses, 14.

 SABBATH, 36, 79, 94.
 Sacrifices, 82.
 Safed, 91.
 Salt, 68.
 Salutations, 71.
 Samaritans, 68.
 Sanhedrin, 60.
 Scorpions, 100.
 Scribes and Pharisees, 16, 80.
 Scripture, Holy, 112.
 Sea, 90.
 Seasons of the Year, 83.
 Seats, Chief, 18.
 Separating Sheep and Goats, 34.
 Sepulchre, 110.
 Serpent, Brazen, 11.
 Serpents, 99, 116.
 Servants, 26.
 Sheba, Queen of, 117.
 Sheep, 32, 34, 35.
 Sheepfold, 30.
 Shekel, 127.
 Shepherd, 31.
 Sick, 45.
 Sickness, 108.
 Signs of Lord's Coming, 84, 88.
 Siloam, 82, 122.
 Skins, Wine, 49.
 Sleep, 107.
 Social Life, 64.
 Sodom and Gomorrah, 114.
 Soil, Different kinds of, 40.
 Solomon, 118.
 Sower, 42.
 Sowing, 42.
 Sparrows, 97.
 Steward, 25, 26.
 Store-cupboard, 14, 25.

 Storms, Winter, 89.
 Streets, Unlighted, 92.
 Sun and Sunshine, 84.
 Swine, 96.
 Sycamore, 100.

 TAILOR, 54.
 Talent, 128.
 Tallith, 74.
 Taxes and Taxation, 62.
 Teaching, Our Lord's, 7.
 Teeth, Gnashing of, 107.
 Temple, 81.
 ,, Building of the, 117.
 Thieves, 30.
 Thirst, 106.
 Thistles, 102.
 Thorns, 102.
 Thunder, 86.
 Time, Divisions of, 126.
 Tithe, 77.
 Topography of Palestine, 90, 123.
 Tower, Unfinished, 55, 123.
 Trade Life, 50.
 Treasures, Eastern, 100, 125, 129.

 VEGETABLE World, 100.
 Vine, 47.
 Vineyard, 47.
 Vipers, 99.

 WAGES, 39.
 Walls, 12, 91.
 War, 121.
 Washing, Ceremonial, 27, 80.
 Watches of the night, 126.
 Watchfulness, 126.
 Water, 107.
 Weather, Signs of, 88.
 Weeping, 107.
 Wind, 88.
 Windows, 13.
 Wine, 49.
 Wine-skins, 49.
 Winnowing, 46.
 Winter, 84.
 Wolf, 37, 94.
 Worm, 100.

 YEAR, Seasons of the, 83.
 Yoke, 41.

INDEX OF TEXTS.

	PAGE
St Matthew iv. 19 . . .	51
" v. 6 . . .	106
" v. 14 . . .	85, 91
" v. 15, 16 . . .	17, 127
" v. 21, 22 . . .	60
" v. 25 . . .	60
" v. 26 . . .	61
" v. 29, 30 . . .	105
" v. 36 . . .	106
" v. 39 . . .	106
" v. 39, 40 . . .	61
" v. 41 . . .	127
" v. 45 . . .	85, 89
" vi. 2 . . .	77
" vi. 3, 4 78, 106, 111	
" vi. 5 . . .	74
" vi. 6 . . .	14, 75
" vi. 11 . . .	22
" vi. 12, 15 . . .	58
" vi. 16-18 . . .	79
" vi. 19 . . .	100, 125
" vi. 20 . . .	12
" vi. 22, 23 . . .	104
" vi. 24 . . .	75
" vi. 25 . . .	23
" vi. 26 . . .	45, 47
" vi. 27 . . .	127
" vi. 28-30 . . .	102
" vi. 29 . . .	118
" vi. 30 . . .	21
" vii. 2 . . .	57, 110
" vii. 3 . . .	110
" vii. 3-5 . . .	81
" vii. 6 . . .	56, 96
" vii. 7 . . .	15
" vii. 9, 10 . . .	77
" vii. 10 . . .	99
" vii. 13 . . .	14, 15
" vii. 15 . . .	37, 95
" vii. 16 . . .	102
" vii. 16, 17 . . .	50
" vii. 24-27 . . .	55, 89
" viii. 11 . . .	18
" viii. 2-4 . . .	109
" viii. 12 . . .	92, 107

	PAGE
St Matthew viii. 14-17 . . .	109
" viii. 20 . . .	95, 97
" viii. 22 . . .	110, 111
" viii. 28-34 . . .	109
" ix. 1-8 . . .	109
" ix. 12 . . .	109, 111
" ix. 15 . . .	66
" ix. 16 . . .	54, 111
" ix. 17 . . .	49, 111
" ix. 23-26 . . .	109
" ix. 32-34 . . .	109
" ix. 24 . . .	107
" ix. 27 . . .	109
" ix. 36 . . .	35
" ix. 37 . . .	39, 46
" ix. 38 . . .	38
" x. 6 . . .	35
" x. 9, 10 . . .	72
" x. 11 . . .	68
" x. 14 . . .	72
" x. 15 . . .	115
" x. 16 36, 95, 98, 99	
" x. 27 . . .	14
" x. 29-31 . . .	98
" x. 30 . . .	106
" x. 35, 36 . . .	25
" xi. 15 . . .	105, 111
" xi. 7 . . .	103
" xi. 8 . . .	121, 125
" xi. 16, 17 . . .	25
" xi. 24 . . .	115
" xi. 29 . . .	41
" xii. 3, 4 . . .	117
" xii. 5 . . .	79
" xii. 9-21 . . .	109
" xii. 11, 12 . . .	36, 80
" xii. 22-37 . . .	109
" xii. 30 . . .	111
" xii. 34 . . .	99
" xii. 36 . . .	61
" xii. 39-40 . . .	118
" xii. 41 . . .	117
" xii. 42 . . .	117
" xii. 50 . . .	23
" xiii. 3 . . .	42

		PAGE			PAGE
St Matthew	xiii. 4-8 . . .	40	St Matthew	xxi. 21, 22 . . .	76, 91
"	xiii. 4-19 . . .	97	"	xxi. 28 . . .	38
"	xiii. 6, 21 . . .	86	"	xxi. 31 . . .	62
"	xiii. 7, 22 . . .	103	"	xxi. 33 . . .	38, 48
"	xiii. 8 . . .	46	"	xxi. 35-39 . . .	60
"	xiii. 9, 43 . . .	105, 111	"	xxi. 41 . . .	48
"	xiii. 16 . . .	105	"	xxi. 42 . . .	117
"	xiii. 19-23 . . .	40, 46	"	xxii. 2 . . .	66
"	xiii. 25, 26 . . .	43	"	xxii. 3, 4 . . .	70
"	xiii. 33 . . .	21	"	xxii. 11, 12 . . .	71, 125
"	xiii. 31, 32 . . .	102	"	xxii. 13 . . .	92, 107
"	xiii. 32 . . .	97	"	xxii. 19 . . .	128
"	xiii. 38 . . .	40, 42	"	xxii. 21 . . .	64
"	xiii. 36-42 . . .	43, 45	"	xxiii. 4 . . .	42
"	xiii. 39 . . .	44, 45	"	xxiii. 5 . . .	74
"	xiii. 43 . . .	85	"	xxiii. 6 . . .	18, 80
"	xiii. 42, 50 . . .	107	"	xxiii. 23 . . .	81, 102
"	xiii. 44 . . .	129	"	xxiii. 24 . . .	81, 93, 112
"	xiii. 45, 46 . . .	55	"	xxiii. 25 . . .	80
"	xiii. 47, 48 . . .	52	"	xxiii. 25, 26 . . .	28
"	xiii. 48, 49 . . .	52	"	xxiii. 27 . . .	80, 110
"	xiii. 52 . . .	26	"	xxiii. 28 . . .	98
"	xiii. 57 . . .	112	"	xxiii. 29 . . .	80
"	xiv. 20 . . .	72	"	xxiii. 33 . . .	99
"	xv. 5, 6 . . .	77	"	xxiii. 35 . . .	114
"	xv. 14 . . .	109, 112	"	xxiii. 37 . . .	98
"	xv. 20 . . .	27	"	xxiv. 7 . . .	87
"	xv. 21-28 . . .	109	"	xxiv. 17 . . .	14
"	xv. 24 . . .	35	"	xxiv. 20 . . .	84
"	xv. 26 . . .	21, 96	"	xxiv. 25 . . .	86
"	xvi. 2, 3 . . .	89	"	xxiv. 27 . . .	86
"	xvi. 4 . . .	118	"	xxiv. 28 . . .	114
"	xvi. 6, 12 . . .	21	"	xxiv. 29 . . .	86
"	xvi. 17 . . .	104	"	xxiv. 30 . . .	84
"	xvi. 19 . . .	15	"	xxiv. 32, 33 . . .	84
"	xvii. 14-21 . . .	109	"	xxiv. 37-39 . . .	114
"	xvii. 20-22 . . .	91, 101	"	xxiv. 41 . . .	20
"	xvii. 27 . . .	51	"	xxiv. 43 . . .	13, 126
"	xviii. 3, 4 . . .	24	"	xxiv. 45 . . .	26
"	xviii. 6 . . .	21	"	xxiv. 51 . . .	107
"	xviii. 8, 9 . . .	105	"	xxv. 1 . . .	67
"	xviii. 12-14 . . .	34	"	xxv. 1-4 . . .	17
"	xviii. 24, 28 . . .	128	"	xxv. 3-10 . . .	67
"	xviii. 35 . . .	58	"	xxv. 5 . . .	107
"	xix. 4, 5 . . .	114	"	xxv. 10, 11 . . .	15
"	xix. 24 . . .	92, 112	"	xxv. 15, 16 . . .	58, 129
"	xx. 1 . . .	38	"	xxv. 24 . . .	45
"	xx. 2, 9 . . .	128	"	xxv. 30 . . .	92, 107
"	xx. 8, 9 . . .	39	"	xxv. 32, 33 . . .	34, 36
"	xx. 15 . . .	105	"	xxv. 41 . . .	87
"	xx. 25, 26 . . .	62	"	xxv. 46 . . .	62
"	xx. 29-34 . . .	109	"	xxvi. 15 . . .	128
"	xxi. 19 . . .	101	"	xxvi. 23 . . .	71

	PAGE		PAGE
St Matthew xxvi. 26, 27	. 22	St Luke xi. 52	. 16
" " xxvi. 31	. 34	" xii. 1.	. 21
St Mark i. 21-28	. 109	" xii. 6.	. 98
" iv. 21	. 17	" xii. 14, 15	. 61
" iv. 26-29	. 43	" xii. 17, 18	. 47
" iv. 29	. 45	" xii. 24	. 99
" vi. 23	. 50	" xii. 32	. 36
" vii. 3, 4	. 27, 80	" xii. 35, 36	. 67
" vii. 6, 7	. 80	" xii. 42	. 26
" vii. 21, 22	. 105	" xii. 47, 48	. 62
" vii. 31-37	. 109	" xii. 49	. 87
" viii. 22-26	. 109	" xii. 54	. 89
" ix. 3	. 54	" xii. 55, 56	. 89
" ix. 40	. 112	" xiii. 1, 2	. 122
" ix. 43-47	. 105	" xiii. 4, 5	. 123
" ix. 43-48	. 88	" xiii. 6, 7	. 101
" ix. 48	. 100	" xiii. 15	. 36, 80, 94
" ix. 49	. 82	" xiii. 25	. 15
" ix. 50	. 69	" xiii. 29	. 90
" xii. 26, 27	. 116	" xiii. 32	. 95
" xii. 40	. 74	" xiv. 5	. 94
" xii. 42	. 128	" xiv. 8, 10	. 18
" xiii. 35	. 126	" xiv. 16, 17	. 69
" xvi. 18	. 100	" xiv. 18, 19	. 65
St Luke iii. 14	. 122	" xiv. 19	. 94
" iv. 23	. 112	" xiv. 28, 29	. 123
" iv. 24	. 112	" xiv. 28-30	. 55
" iv. 25-27	. 119	" xiv. 31, 32	. 122
" v. 4	. 52	" xv. 4-7	. 34, 35
" v. 10	. 57	" xv. 8.	. 13, 126, 129
" v. 39	. 112	" xv. 13	. 25
" vi. 25	. 107	" xv. 14	. 47
" vi. 38	. 58, 78	" xv. 15, 16	. 97
" vi. 44	. 103	" xv. 17, 18	. 25
" vii. 11-17	. 109	" xv. 22	. 125
" vii. 25	. 121	" xv. 23	. 94
" vii. 41-43	. 58	" xvi. 1-9	. 57
" vii. 44-46	. 70	" xvi. 19	. 124
" viii. 11	. 42	" xvi. 21	. 96
" ix. 52-56	. 68	" xvi. 23, 24	. 88
" ix. 62	. 41	" xvii. 6	. 101
" x. 2	. 46	" xvii. 7-10	. 39
" x. 3	. 95	" xvii. 28-30	. 115
" x. 4	. 71	" xvii. 32	. 115
" x. 7	. 68, 112	" xvii. 34	. 24
" x. 12	. 95	" xviii. 1-8	. 76
" x. 18	. 87	" xviii. 2-8	. 61
" x. 19	. 100	" xviii. 10, 11	. 73
" x. 21	. 24	" xviii. 11, 12	. 79
" x. 30	. 59, 124	" xviii. 14	. 112
" xi. 7	. 24	" xix. 12-27	. 121
" xi. 8, 9	. 23, 76	" xix. 13	. 58, 129
" xi. 11-14	. 108	" xix. 22-27	. 109

	PAGE		PAGE
St Luke xxi. 1-4 . . .	78	St John viii. 56, 58 . . .	115
„ xxi. 25 . . .	90	„ ix. 1-13 . . .	109
„ xxii. 27 . . .	26	„ x. 1, 8, 10 . . .	30
„ xxii. 31 . . .	46	„ x. 3-5 . . .	33
St John ii. 16 . . .	82	„ x. 7-9 . . .	30
„ ii. 19, 21 . . .	81	„ x. 11 . . .	32
„ iii. 3 . . .	23	„ x. 12 . . .	95
„ iii. 8 . . .	88	„ x. 13 . . .	33
„ iii. 14 . . .	116	„ x. 14 . . .	33
„ iii. 19-21 . . .	86	„ x. 16 . . .	31
„ iii. 29 . . .	66	„ x. 26, 27 . . .	37
„ iv. 14 . . .	22, 107	„ x. 28 . . .	36
„ iv. 32-34 . . .	23	„ xi. 9 . . .	126
„ iv. 35 . . .	44	„ xi. 9, 10 . . .	85
„ iv. 36 . . .	39, 44	„ xi. 11-14 . . .	107
„ iv. 37 . . .	112	„ xi. 30-45 . . .	109
„ iv. 37, 38 . . .	44	„ xii. 14, 15 . . .	26
„ iv. 38 . . .	45	„ xii. 24 . . .	43
„ v. 25 . . .	109	„ xii. 35, 36 . . .	85
„ v. 27 . . .	61	„ xii. 46 . . .	85
„ v. 35 . . .	17	„ xiii. 10 . . .	26, 70
„ vi. 27 . . .	23	„ xiii. 14 . . .	70
„ vi. 32 . . .	116	„ xiii. 26 . . .	71
„ vi. 33 . . .	22	„ xiv. 2 . . .	82
„ vi. 35 . . .	22	„ xv. 1, 5 . . .	38, 49
„ vi. 48-50 . . .	116	„ xv. 15 . . .	26
„ vi. 50 . . .	22	„ xvi. 21, 22 . . .	23
„ vi. 51 . . .	22, 104	„ xxi. 6 . . .	52
„ vi. 53, 54 . . .	104	„ xxi. 15-17 . . .	35
„ vii. 22-23 . . .	79	„ xxi. 17 . . .	36
„ vii. 37 . . .	22, 82, 106	Acts xxvi. 14 . . .	42
„ viii. 12 . . .	82, 84		

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